Their Ways:
Theorizing Reinterpretation in Popular Music

Volume II

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Composition and Music Theory)
in the University of Michigan
2015

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This dissertation is the second of two submitted in partial fulfilment of the Doctor of Philosophy in Composition and Music Theory, the other is *The Quietest of Whispers: a symphony for chamber orchestra*.

For Jason, Kris, and Rob,
who brought this shy kid out of his shell and got him dancing.

And for Margaret Harrison,
who, according to my father, both loved Frank's music, and would
have been proud that her grandson wrote about him in his dissertation.

Acknowledgements

The first inklings for this work come to me around 2006, when I was lecturing at the University of Ottawa. Since then many things about the project and about myself have changed and I am grateful to have shared the way with a fine company of mentors, teachers, colleagues, family, and friends. Foremost among these is Karen Fournier, my advisor, mentor, fiercest critic, and thus my greatest scholarly advocate. She saw in my desire to write about Sinatra a larger project about cover songs, encouraged me to explore its possibilities, and helped me crystallize my thoughts through many drafts. I also owe thanks to my dissertation committee, Walter Everett, Joseph Lam, Bright Sheng, and William Gehring, who have been unwaveringly supportive of my work. Walter Everett and Joseph Lam have been particularly influential in helping me reflect on and improve my analytical skills, as well as teaching me how to fit my analyses into broader theoretical frameworks. Judith Becker deserves special mention as a dear mentor and friend whose clarity of thought and humanity are among the best models for a young scholar. I would further like to thank the Music Theory and Musicology departments at the University of Michigan, particularly Ramon Satyendra, Kevin Korsyn, Christi-Ann Castro, Meilu Ho, Mark Clague, Charles Garrett, and Stefano Mengozzi who, through their mentoring and friendship, have supported me and my work, making both better.

I owe much to my teachers at the University of Ottawa and the Université de Montréal, whose thinking and feedback laid so much of the groundwork for this project.

Lori Burns first showed me popular music could be analyzed, and was also the first to suggest I eventually develop my ideas about Sinatra into a dissertation. Jean-Jacques Nattiez and Philip Tagg have had an influence on me to which I doubt I could ever do justice in words. They are in many ways my *maîtres de pensée*, and I hope that they find the ideas contained in these pages to be worthy extensions to their fine work.

J. P. MacDonald deserves many thanks for generously making the time to talk with me about his craft and answering my questions so honestly and enthusiastically. Kristopher Waddell and Robin Karuna have been close friends for many years no matter how far apart we may have lived. Few people know me as well as they do, and they are an essential part of my sense of home. My colleagues at the University of Michigan and elsewhere, Jessica Getman, Andrew Kohler, Sarah Gerk, Kathryn Cox, David Heetderks, Jimmy McNally, and Myra Palmero, have been indispensable sounding boards, support networks, and good friends over the years. Eric Abbey and Colin Helb encouraged me to write a chapter on Sid Vicious for their book on aggressive music. That chapter later became one of the case studies in this dissertation. Cora Palfy bravely proofread the manuscript, called out my puns, and helped me stay sane and laughing. I will always treasure Martine Rhéaume and Éric Champagne and the feeling of excitement about the musical world I feel when our "tripartition" is together.

I would not have survived as well these last years were it not for my sensei, senpai, and kohai at the University of Michigan Kendo Club, the Eastern Michigan University Kendo Club, the Detroit Kendo club, and Mukôjima Kenyûkai in Tokyo. I have learned more from them about facing my fears, improving myself, testing and surpassing my limits, and being

a kind and compassionate teacher than from any others. They have opened a door for me on a path that I will travel for the rest of my life.

Lastly, I owe much to my family. My father, Randall Ware, instilled in me my love of music and has supported my study of it no matter how inadvisable this course of action may have seemed. He is my most important audience, and I hope that the work I do continues to make him proud. Nathan Adams, Jason Davenport, Stacey Brown, and Marc LeMay are my siblings in every way but DNA, and their positive influence is as incalculable as it is humbling. My adopted family, Byron, Jana, Carolyn, Mitch, Jon, Juli, Kevin, Amanda, Sara, Jay, Darla, Molly, Maddy, and Toby have enriched my life beyond anything I could have imagined. Kabochan, who either sat on the back of my chair, in my lap, or on my keyboard as I tried to type a particularly complex paragraph, has remained a steadfast, loving, and goofy presence for which I am deeply grateful (if sometimes irritated). In the place of privilege at the end is my wife, Megan Hill, who has always been my strongest advocate, closest friend, and dearest soul. Hers is a steadfast and honest love that I strive to return with the same intensity it is so selflessly given.

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I propose an analytical approach to the practice of covering songs. Although song repurposing is a pervasive and an important practice in contemporary Euro-American popular music, there has been only scant scholarly literature dedicated to the subject. What few analyses there are have focused only on individual original-cover pairs and, thus, little work has been done to understand the broader process of covering songs. "Cover song" has thus remained an ambiguous term that conceals many different interpretive subject positions.

In order to dispel this ambiguity, I propose to analyze the practice of covering as a series of decisions, made by the cover artist, to be similar to or different from a base song. Drawing from Michel de Certeau's theories of creativity, I describe the base song as a "strategy," an organizing force to which the cover artist responds with "tactics," changes they make to repurpose the song for their particular expressive intentions. Depending on their number and extent, tactics either pull the new interpretation away from the original, or emulate it. These tendencies can be conceived of as continuum, stretching toward isomorphism (likeness) on one end, or metamorphism (dissimilarity). A third category arises when a song is repurposed by setting entirely new lyrics to an earlier song's music. This is no longer a cover but a "derivative," a new song that does not depend on the original for its meanings.

Using the above framework, I bring multiple analytical lenses from music theory, ethnomusicology, performance studies, linguistics, and semiotics to bear on several case studies from the family of songs related to Frank Sinatra's hit "My Way." Starting with its French source, Claude François's "Comme d'habitude," I show how different lyrics merge with the same music to create the "My Way" derivative. I then explore Sid Vicious's violent tactics in his metamorphic covering of Sinatra, before ending with an analysis of how Canadian lounge act, Johnny Vegas, negotiates homage to both Sinatra's and Elvis Presley's versions in his isomorphic cover. By drawing out the various ways people repurpose songs, it is my hope to help both broaden and focus the scholarly conversation on this important musical practice.

CHAPTER 1

Covering and Repurposing as Cultural Practices: Defining the Cover Song Continuum

> "One of the simplest views… might be that the process of covering, whether considered within the conceptual or commercial context, is about favorite songs and about great songs. Classics and standards. In the process, no matter the artistic or commercial intent, these musical artifacts are kept culturally alive, repeating as echoes and historical duets." –George Plasketes[1]

Cover Songs: A Definition and an Illustration

What do we mean by "cover songs"? Although the term itself comes from the North American recording industry, its exact temporal origins are unclear, and it has referred to numerous different practices across the last century.[2] My concern, however, is not with the historical evolution of the term but with its current usage within Euro-American popular music and scholarship. Most definitions today resemble the following: cover songs are the recordings or performances of a song originally recorded by someone else.[3] While this is certainly adequate, I think Jocelyn Neal, in defining the term for her monograph, *The Songs of Jimmy Rodgers: A Legacy in Country Music,* addresses an important nuance. She states

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[1] "Introduction: Like a Version" in George Plasketes, ed., *Play It Again: Cover Songs in Popular Music* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 2.
[2] Michael Coyle, "Hijacked Hits and Antic Authenticity: Cover Songs, Race, and Postwar Marketing," Roger Beebe, Denise Fulbrook, and Ben Saunders, *Rock Over the Edge: Transformations in Popular Music Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 136.
[3] This is adapted from Deena Weinstein's definition in "Cover Song," *Grove Music Online*, n.d., as well as for the website SecondHandSongs, http://secondhandsongs.com/wiki/Main/IntroductionToTheDatabase, accessed 18 March 2015.

that "[i]n popular music, cover versions occur when an artist performs a song, either live or on record, that belongs, culturally speaking, to another artist."[4] The notion of "cultural ownership" sidesteps issues of copyright since its arbiters are not lawyers and courts of law, but audiences and courts of public opinion. In this sense, it is perhaps best thought of as cultural attribution; regardless of who wrote Rodgers's songs, they are attributed to him as his own complete utterances in the popular imagination. Neal continues that this process of attribution

> …relies on primacy and competency: the first performance of a song judged to be musically satisfactory holds sway in determining which artist will be associated with that song. The process also takes into account more elusive factors such as the relative levels of fame of two artists who are vying for attention with the same song—in many cases, the more famous artist wins simply by virtue of superior name recognition. Finally singers can wrest artistic control of a song from a previous singer by virtue of a particularly sincere or autobiographically driven performance; hence the phrase, frequently offered as a high compliment, "that performer really made that song his or her own."[5]

Thus, in a crucial sense, covering is about transferring, in whole or in part, the cultural attribution of a song, not simply re-performing it.

The process can be illustrated with an example. In 1967, French pop artist Claude François released a song called "Comme d'habitude" ("As Usual"). François, who was already a successful pop star in France and who would later be remembered as "the undisputed icon of French kitsch," wrote the song with composer Jacques Revaux and lyricist Gilles Thibeault in an afternoon outside by the river at his home in Dannemois.[6] Inspired by the heartbreak François experienced after the end of a three-year relationship, the trio wrote organically. They started from a verse Revaux had written earlier in the year

[4] Jocelyn R. Neal, *The Songs of Jimmie Rodgers: A Legacy in Country Music*, Profiles in Popular Music (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009): 13.
[5] Ibid., 12–13.
[6] http://www.rfimusic.com/artist/chanson/claude-francois/biography, accessed 31 March 2015.

and added a chorus melody, chords, and words. François described the experience as a "cry from the heart that came out because I was feeling very hopeless."[7] While vacationing in France later that same year, Paul Anka heard "Comme d'habitude" and purchased the publishing rights. Though he claimed to have found the overall song mediocre, he nevertheless admitted that "something in the melody grabbed [him]."[8] When Frank Sinatra announced his retirement to Anka, the latter knew what to do. Reportedly in a single night, Anka wrote new lyrics to "Comme d'habitude," altered the music slightly, and created a new song full of triumph and self-assurance that became Sinatra's signature hit. It was recorded in a single take on 31 December 1968 and released in the spring of 1969 as the title track of what was supposed to be Sinatra's last album. The song was called "My Way."[9]

So strong was the change in cultural attribution that "My Way" quickly eclipsed the earlier "Comme d'habitude" almost completely, both in North America and abroad. As early as 1973, François himself substituted the new refrain in a performance with Mireille Mathieu on the show "Midi Trente."[10] Now the point of reference in the Anglo-American world, "My Way" would be covered by a great diversity of artists who would shift some of the cultural attribution to themselves over the ensuing decade, most notably in a nihilistic and punked-out version by Sid Vicious (1978) and a 1950s boogie-woogie rendition by Elvis Presley in his final downward spiral (1973-1977). In 1995, musician J. P. MacDonald of Ottawa, Canada, created the persona of "Johnny Vegas," a chain smoking, hard-boozing, Las Vegas has-been who, in the midst of a swing and lounge music revival, took audiences

[7] Fabien Lecoeuvre, *Claude François: Autobiographie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2007), 117. All translations from French are my own unless otherwise indicated.
[8] Paul Anka and David Dalton, *My Way: An Autobiography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013), 207.
[9] Joe Queenan, "How Sinatra Did It My Way - via a French Pop Star and a Canadian Lounge Act," *The Guardian*, July 18, 2007, sec. Music, http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2007/jul/05/popandrock1, accessed 13 March 2015; Anka and Dalton, *My Way*, 210.
[10] Starting at 2'11" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivX4UmaTRMA.

back to the glory days of the Rat Pack.[11] MacDonald's version of "My Way"—which was arranged from Presley's 1977 recording, but through which MacDonald performed a complicated blend of Presley and Sinatra—was part of MacDonald's very first set, and was, for many years, his character's swan song at the end of the night.

These illustrations provide a brief sketch of the extent of the cultural activity generated by "Comme d'habitude" and a mere four versions of "My Way." Though it is likely not the *most* covered song in history, as Anka has claimed, it has had a broad cultural impact beyond the above versions, stretching from Anka's own version in 1969 through a 1980s Japanese translation, sung by *enka* legend Hibari Misora, to the 2011 *America's Got Talent* winner, Landau Eugene Murphy Jr. It was 2005's most popular British funeral anthem and remains a karaoke favourite across the globe.[12] The cultural attribution to Sinatra has withstood all of this, and his recording remains the point of reference for a staggering amount of reproduction, re-digestion, and re-presentation.

Cover Song Scholarship

The website SecondHandSongs currently estimates that nearly 48,000 originals have at least one cover, but, as the site warns, this statistic is in all likelihood a vast underestimation given that the work of inputting songs is ongoing.[13] From the 48,000 originals, the site currently counts nearly 300,000 covers from any language or cultural

[11] Tamara Stevens and Erin Stevens, *Swing Dancing*, The American Dance Floor (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Greenwood, 2011), 161–186.
[12] "My Way Tops Funeral Charts," *The Guardian*, November 17, 2005, http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2005/nov/17/arts.artsnews1, accessed 27 February 2012; In Manila, "My Way" is at the center of at least half a dozen murders. Norimitsu Onishi, "Sinatra Song Often Strikes Deadly Chord," *The New York Times*, February 7, 2010, sec. International / Asia Pacific, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/07/world/asia/07karaoke.html, accessed 27 February 2012.
[13] http://secondhandsongs.com, accessed 17 March 2015. Note that the expansion of the database is put in stark relief by George Plasketes's reporting that it claimed only 40,000 songs with at least one cover in 2010. Plasketes, *Play It Again*, 1.

origin. If all of this points to anything, it is that cover songs are an unquestionably important medium of cultural expression in popular music around the globe. Yet scholarship on cover songs has remained surprisingly scant. While few analyses of original-cover pairs exist both inside and outside of music scholarship, particularly little attention has been paid to the broader issue of considering covering as a *cultural practice*.

Kurt Mosser's "'Cover Songs': Ambiguity, Multivalence, Polysemy" (2008) remains the only article to come close.[14] The term "'cover' song," he argues, "is used without the recognition that there are many different kinds of 'covers,' [or *covering*] and thus that the reference of the very term 'cover song' is systematically ambiguous."[15] To address the ambiguity, he proposes two courses of action. First, he eschews the term "original," replacing it instead with "base song," and argues that some songs "due to [their] status, popularity, or possibly other reasons, [are] taken to be paradigmatic, and thus the [versions] to which all other recordings or performances are compared."[16] Second, in the absence of specific vocabulary for types of covers, he has proposed a number of fuzzy categories that describe the level of veneration toward the original.[17] In his theory, the covers that are most like their originals are called "reduplicative covers," since they attempt to reproduce the original in every detail. These give way to "minor," and then "major interpretations," "send-ups," and finally "parodies," which represent songs he considers the most different from their originals.[18] The problem with this taxonomy is that it conflates the *extent* of change (i.e. "major interpretation") with the *quality* of change (i.e.

[14] Kurt Mosser, "'Cover Songs': Ambiguity, Multivalence, Polysemy," *Popular Musicology Online*, 2008, http://www.popular-musicology-online.com/issues/02/mosser.html, accessed 17 March 2015.
[15] Ibid, I – prg. 1.
[16] Ibid, I: - prg. 2.
[17] Mosser uses the term "fuzzy category" in the Wittgensteinian sense, where an unspecified number of traits must be present for something to be considered a category member.
[18] Mosser, "'Cover Songs': Ambiguity, Multivalence, Polysemy," II.

"parodic cover") and thus it lacks internal consistency and explicative power. Still, Mosser is so far the only person to look at covers as embodying different categories of artistic intention. He ascribes his categories to the *songs* themselves, however. This makes the next step, to see covers as traces of the creative cultural practices that negotiate issues of influence and originality, a short and logical one.

Beyond Mosser's preliminary work, there is little in the way of sustained studies of cover songs or the act of covering. George Plasketes notes this sparseness in the introduction to his 2010 collection of essays, *Play It Again: Cover Songs In Popular Music*.[19] Studies in this collection range from individual song analyses to position papers on cover songs, and it represents the first and only scholarly volume dedicated to the topic of cover songs. What the collection is not (and does not pretend to be) is a systematic approach to cover song analysis. Instead, its open-endedness is reflected in the diversity of scholarly approaches to cover songs that include musicology, but draw most heavily on humanities disciplines outside the field of music. [20] The only other in-depth treatment of cover songs from a music discipline is Thomas Schneider's dissertation, "Blues Cover Songs: The Intersection of Blues and Rock on the Popular Music Charts (1955-1995)" (2001), which is a broad statistical survey the titles, number, and popularity of rock covers of blues songs.[21] Although Schneider's purpose is not music theoretical analysis, he does reflect upon the lack of standardized methods for assessing musical change in cover songs. He advocates for

[19] George Plasketes, ed., *Play It Again: Cover Songs in Popular Music*, Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010): 2.
[20] For instance Sheldon Schiffer, a film studies scholar, analyzes Sinatra's and Vicious's "My Way" as intertexts with politics, ideology, and particularly fashion. The main material of his analysis is biographical detail, historical context, and visual imagery. Other than a few mentions of the lyrics, the music is almost totally absent from his account. Ibid., 82–88.
[21] Thomas A. Schneider, "Blues Cover Songs: The Intersection of Blues and Rock on the Popular Music Charts (1955-1995)," (Dissertation, University of Memphis, 2001).

a systematic analytical approach that allows scholars to measure the extent of changes from one version to another by assigning specific values to musical parameters, but he concedes that qualitative aspects of music like timbre or affect are difficult to quantify as fixed and comparable values.[22]

The remaining sources on cover songs are limited to book chapters or journal articles. In an essay entitled "An Analytical Model for Analyzing Cover Songs and Their Sources" from *Pop-Culture Pedagogy in the Music Classroom: Teaching Tools from American Idol to YouTube* (2011), Victoria Malawey proposes a method of using cover songs as a means of discussing topics in undergraduate core theory classes. She uses a list somewhat akin to what Schneider seemed to have in mind, although her approach is qualitatively grounded. Her work identifies analytical categories (voice and words, sound, pitch, time, and pacing of events) and then uses those categories to compare original and cover.[23] This analytical model, however, is meant as a pedagogical tool to illustrate topics in music theory that might be taught on a given day in a core music theory or music appreciation course. Though not meant for high-level scholarly inquiry into the act of covering, one advantage of Malawey's model is that it permits the comparison of qualitative observations about cover songs.

There are a few original-cover analyses in scholarly music literature, and they generally demonstrate the many ways that variations in sound structures (chords, melodies, rhythms, textures, etc.) from version to version may be analyzed qualitatively.

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[22] Ibid., 404-405.

[23] It is also worth noting that Malawey's categories do not meaningfully discuss production values such as sound design or staging. Victoria Malawey, "An Analytic Model for Examining Cover Songs and Their Sources," in Nicole Biamonte, ed., *Pop-Culture Pedagogy in the Music Classroom: Teaching Tools from American Idol to YouTube* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 204–207.

Lori Burns (1997), who has explored covers more than any other theorist, has at various stages combined Schenkerian, performance, wave-form, and film analysis in trying to understand the expressive intentions of kd lang, Billie Holliday, Rhianna, and Mandy Moore.[24] Dave Headlam (1995. 1997) has used Schenkerian analysis to illustrate stylistic change between Led Zeppelin and Cream covers and their blues originals.[25] Mark J. Butler (2003) combines lyric, rhythmic, harmonic, and formal analysis to address the construction and deconstruction of authenticity in the Pet Shop Boys.[26] John Wallace White (1997) layers multiple parameters of Dolly Parton's cover of Petula Clark's "Downtown" with the original to examine how the songs are conditioned by consumerist radio formats.[27] Similarly, ethnomusicologist Rob Bowman (2003) compares parameters of four versions of "Try A Little Tenderness" to understand its evolution from a Tin-Pan Alley song into an Otis Redding hit.[28] Lastly, Kevin Holm-Hudson (2002) draws on semiotic approaches from Charles S. Peirce, Jean-Jaques Nattiez, and Philip Tagg to consider how production changes between the Carpenters' and Sonic Youth's versions of "Superstar."[29] While these

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[24] Lori Burns, "'Joanie' Get Angry" in John Covach and Graeme M. Boone, eds., *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 93-112; Lori Burns and Alyssa Woods, "Authenticity, Appropriation, Signification: Tori Amos on Gender, Race, and Violence in Covers of Billie Holiday and Eminem," *Music Theory Online* 10, no. 2 (June 2004), http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.04.10.2/mto.04.10.2.burns_woods.html, accessed 10 May 2012; Lori Burns et al., "Cotextuality in Music Video: Covering and Sampling in the *Cover Art* Video of 'Umbrella'" in Biamonte, ed., *Pop-Culture Pedagogy*, 233-263.

[25] Dave Headlam "Does the Song Remain the Same? Questions of Authorship and Identification in the Music of Led Zeppelin," Elizabeth West Marvin and Richard Hermann, *Concert Music, Rock, and Jazz Since 1945: Essays and Analytical Studies* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1995): 313-363; Dave Headlam, "Blues Transformations in the Music of Cream," Covach and Boone, *Understanding Rock, 59-92*.

[26] Mark J. Butler, "Taking It Seriously: Intertextuality and Authenticity in Two Covers by the Pet Shop Boys," *Popular Music* 22, no. 1 (January 2003): 1–19.

[27] John Wallace White, "Radio Formats and the Transformation of Musical Style: Codes and Cultural Values in the Remaking of Tunes," *College Music Symposium* 37 (January 1, 1997): 1-12.

[28] Rob Bowman, "The Determining Role of Performance in the Articulation of Meaning: The Case of 'Try A Little Tenderness,'" Alan F. Moore, ed., *Analyzing Popular Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 103–130.

[29] Kevin J. Holm-Hudson, "Your Guitar, It Sounds So Sweet and Clear: Semiosis in Two Versions of 'Superstar,'" *Music Theory Online* 8, no. 2 (December 2002).

approaches are not intended to be broad theories of cover songs, they nevertheless demonstrate how various flexible and even interdisciplinary analytical methodologies can be used to make specific qualitative musical arguments for how one version differs from another.

Ending Ambiguity: Toward a Workable Taxonomy of Covering Practices

Absent a workable taxonomy of cover songs, we are left with a totalizing category, "covers," that does not speak to the myriad motivations, methods, and subject positions that a cover artist may adopt in the course of adapting a song. The opening examples of Claude François, Frank Sinatra, Sid Vicious, Elvis Presley, and Johnny Vegas illustrate the need for clarity: although they are all from the same song family, none of the performers reproduce their source in the same way, with the same intent, or to the same effect. In fact, as we will later see, because it substitutes an entirely new set of lyrics and thus changes the meanings in the song fundamentally, it is doubtful that "My Way" is a cover of François in the first place. This creates the need for a new category of reproduction that, while related to covering, is also independent of it. No current approach reveals the cultural processes interacting through the above song family, much less proposes the needed third category.

This ambiguity about the cultural processes at work among the "My Way" song family is a microcosm of the gap in scholarship about cover songs in general. There is currently little theoretical understanding of covering as practice. We certainly understand, as in Neal's definition at the outset of this chapter, what "a cover" means, but we do not yet understand what it means "to cover." This has been exacerbated by confusion over the difference between the *way* a cover changes and *how much* it changes. Both are important.

The former qualitatively delineates the manner in which a cover is different, the latter quantitatively accounts of the number and extensiveness of the differences. I view cover songs from both perspectives, as the sum total of performance decisions made by the cover artist with respect to the original.[30] In this case, a performance decision can be understood as any choice made by the performer to change or preserve any aspect of the original or source song. Such decisions are the focal point of both qualitative and quantitative analyses, and are thus the best basis for any cover song taxonomy if it is to be meaningful. Open-ended, qualitative analyses of any song parameter, akin to what Malawey suggested, can thus be combined with the more quantitative analysis of the extent to which those decisions change or preserve the original song, in line with Schneider's reflections. This dissertation proposes to bring these strands together by referencing how the nature, number, and extent of performance decisions in each member of the family of songs that include "Comme d'habitude" and the four versions of "My Way" presented at the outset of this chapter shed light on the basic intention behind the creation of each cover to be like, unlike, or separate from the original. By dividing the cultural practice of song reproduction into these three tendencies, I wish to begin a larger, yet clearer and more focused, discussion of what it means to cover.

The Cover Song Continuum

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), cultural theorist Michel de Certeau advances a theory that holds great explanatory power with regard to creative acts of repurposing. In

[30] I am essentially analyzing what Joseph Lam has called "musiking" (after Christopher Small's "musicking"): the act of interactively negotiating music by all players involved wherein music is used as object, site, and process. Joseph S. C. Lam, "Music and Male Bonding in Ming China," *Nan Nü* 9 (2007): 81–83, footnote 16.

his view, creativity is animated by the interactions of two antagonistic forces that he refers to as "strategies" and "tactics."[31] "Strategies" represent institutional forces that create and organize, while "tactics" are the responses of individual agents to these institutional forces, frequently expressed as adaptations or subversions of the strategy to the individual's needs. For instance, let us say that a city planner lays out a park with sidewalks but, to preserve the greenery of the park, these sidewalks are placed at the perimeter of the park only. The intention for people to walk on the sidewalks around the park is the "strategy," or the institutional force. Once the park has been built, pedestrians who are running late for work see that if they cut across the park diagonally, they will save time. To ignore the sidewalk and instead use the park as a throughway is a "tactic." It recognizes the "strategy" (the sidewalks), but adapts the space to the pedestrians' immediate needs. If enough people feel that this shortcut is worthwhile, eventually a dirt path may form diagonally across the park, a change that invites a new usage of the space without fundamentally altering it.

Cover songs provide a musical illustration of this process. The base song can be seen as a "strategy" by virtue of its greater cultural power as the first iteration of a particular song, and by the concomitant strong cultural attribution of the song to the original performer. The base song's musical structures, lyrics, performance style, setting, genre, etc., are the standards to which subsequent interpreters will conform, or from which they will diverge. Any departures from the standards are "tactics," which can be understood as the ways the cover artists change songs for their own expressive ends.[32] Thus, a "tactic" can be

[31] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): xviii-xix.
[32] It is important to note that, although I use the word "artist," I fully recognize that it is not just the singer that is responsible for creative choices. Other musicians, arrangers, producers, engineers, executives, etc., all may have a hand in the final product. However, since the song is almost always attributed to the singer in the popular imagination, and since the contributions of the others are often quite difficult to identify with certainty, I will continue to use "artist" as shorthand for the whole production.

identified as any moment, however short or long, that the new version does something that the old does not. This could be anything: a chord change, a hand gesture, a variation in pronunciation, or any number of other possibilities. Just as with our pedestrians creating a dirt path while crossing the park, the change alters the song without completely redefining it. For the purposes of understanding covering as practice, I will examine how "Comme d'habitude," as the source of "My Way," and "My Way" itself act as separate strategies, or the standards that their own covers must then accept or change. I will then analyze each cover of "My Way" as consisting of various tactics that modify the original meanings of the song, and I will examine how many of those meanings are changed and to what extent they are changed. When taken together, the tactics will reveal the nature of the practice in each cover.

This last point is the core element of my cover song taxonomy. Tactics can have a small effect on the song (a IV replacing a II^6) chord, or they can have far-reaching implications (the equalization of rhythmic and dynamic profiles that eliminates any sense of climax). The change can be local (a changed pronoun in the lyrics), or they can be parametric (the use of a linguistic accent). They can be few, or they can suffuse the texture to the point where the song is barely recognizable. The qualitative changes that the tactics provoke can then be examined quantitatively to ascertain their number and the extent to which they change the song. This overall gestalt illustrates how a cover is weighted toward one of two poles on a continuum between similarity and difference with respect to the base song.

The continuum I develop is implicit in a number of different writings on cover songs, of which Mosser's categories are but one example, without having been specifically

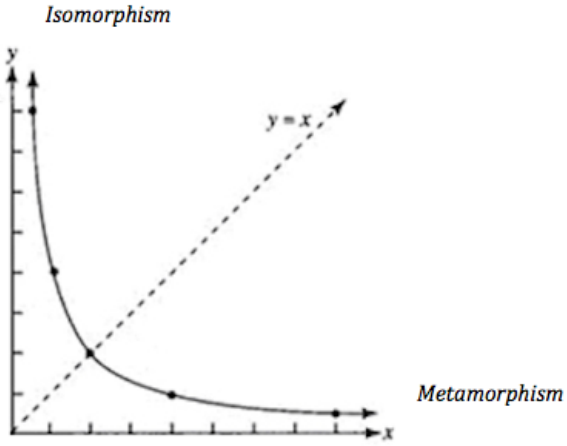
identified and theorized.[33] The popular assumption stemming from these writings is that similarity and difference are a binary opposition. The problem with this conception is that covering is defined by the presence or absence of change alone. Similarity is not seen as an affirmative category, and the result is that the "similar-different" binary breaks down to a single category: "degree of difference." This, however, belies the reality that to be similar or different are *separate, yet interdependent choices* made by cover performers. They are separate because the choice to remain faithful to the base song in a given passage is as much of an interpretive decision, with its own meanings and implications, as it is to change the same passage. They are interdependent because within a choice to do something differently from the original there will always be some element that remains similar and vice versa. For example, when Sid Vicious draws a gun and opens fire on the audience at the end of his version of "My Way," he destroys the musical climax of the song, but not the climactic sense of the moment; the gunshots, however alien to the base song, still represent the moment of highest tension in the song. Likewise, Johnny Vegas might want to sing the passage just like Sinatra, thus tending toward similarity. By virtue of the fact that he does not have Sinatra's voice or exact mannerisms, however, the passage will still have a measure of difference despite his best efforts.

It is clear from these examples that an exclusive fixation on the degree of change is inadequate to understanding cover songs since, in my conception, similarity and difference are not antitheses, but differing features of cover song performance decisions. To represent this, in Figure 1 I have plotted similarity and difference, not as binary opposites, but as two

[33] These have been theorized by Weinstein as "drastically different" to "nearly identical" in "Appreciating Cover Songs: Stereophony," Plasketes, *Play It Again*, 245.; by Plasketes as "imitations" and "re-possessions" in "Further Reflections on the Cover Age: A Collage and Chronicle," Ibid., 26, 29.; by Neal as "substansive modification" or "faithful rendition" in Neal, *The Songs of Jimmie Rodgers*, 14–15.

co-productive dimensions on a graph. Here, the degree of isomorphism (similarity) is plotted along the Y-axis, while the degree of metamorphism (difference) is on the X-axis.[34] The extreme points of the X- and Y-axes are theoretical constructs. On the one hand, pure metamorphism would result in total dissimilarity between cover and original, while pure isomorphism would result in a totally indistinguishable product. The latter would, for all intents and purposes, be the same song, and the former a completely different song with no relationship to the original. For this reason, a hyperbola best illustrates the continuum between isomorphism and metamorphism in cover songs. Both ends of the curve are asymptotes, tending toward the X- and Y-axes, but only reaching them at infinity.

Fig. 1 – The Cover Song Continuum



Covers, therefore, can be thought of as representing points along the curve between the theoretical ends of the asymptotes. For ease of reference, I will refer to songs closer to the X-axis as "metamorphic covers" (discussed in Chapter 3) and songs closer to the Y-axis as "isomorphic covers" (discussed in Chapter 4). To be clear, I do not use these terms to

[34] I am adapting this term "metamorphism" from geology, where it means "a change in structure or constitution of a rock due to natural agencies" (Random House Dictionary, 2015), since mathematics, from which we get the term "isomorphism," has no analogous word. I prefer these more formal terms since "similarity" and "difference" are common words whose meanings could get confused with their common usage.

identify something inherent to the cover songs, but rather to denote the attributes of the practice that created them. The terms are also not absolute but represent a range of possible isomorphisms or metamorphisms. A song that is made up of many and very extensive performance decisions that are similar to its original (high on the Y-axis) would nevertheless exhibit some degree of metamorphism (lower on the X-axis). Likewise, a song with many and extensive differences (high on the X-axis) would nevertheless have a measurable amount of similarity (a small elevation on the Y-axis). Regardless of how many or how extensive differences might be, however, a cover will always inhabit the world of its base song in some way. That world is defined by the hyperbolic curve that is the cover song continuum.

There is one final aspect of Figure 1 that has yet to be addressed: the dotted arrow pointed diagonally and to the right marked "y=x" that transects the continuum at the exact midpoint between isomorphism and metamorphism. The arrow represents a third category of reproduction that is rarely discussed in the literature on cover songs, in all likelihood because it either occupies a gray area that can be overlooked and assimilated into the ambiguous catch-all category of "cover songs" or is dismissed completely as unrelated. In actuality, this third category, which is embodied in the relationship of "Comme d'habitude" to "My Way" (and will be discussed in Chapter 2), is both at once. The main feature of these types of reproduction is the substitution of the source's lyrics for completely new and unrelated words, with a new title, while the music remains almost entirely unchanged. Thus, while they bear a family resemblance, they nevertheless do not exhibit an base song-cover relationship since the new song does not depend on its source for its meanings. What emergent meanings the shared musical structures might evoke are

altered by their relation to the new lyrics, thus giving the new song a different overall identity. This third category therefore has a near equal balance of isomorphism and metamorphism and, as the arrow suggests, moves away from the continuum itself. They are songs that have a neutral stance toward their sources, songs that represent similarity and difference in equal measure.

As of yet, these songs have no agreed-upon name in music scholarship. In fact, the only place I have found any reference to such a category is on the SecondHandSongs website, which calls them "adaptations."[35] The website defines the term as "a new version of a work, for instance a translation," and gives the example that "My Way" is an adaptation of "Comme d'habitude." While the term "adaptation" is adequate on the surface, the scant definition of it on the website is not. Would not a cover song be a "new version of a work"? There is a word in U.S. copyright law, however, that is much clearer: "derivative." This term can be defined as

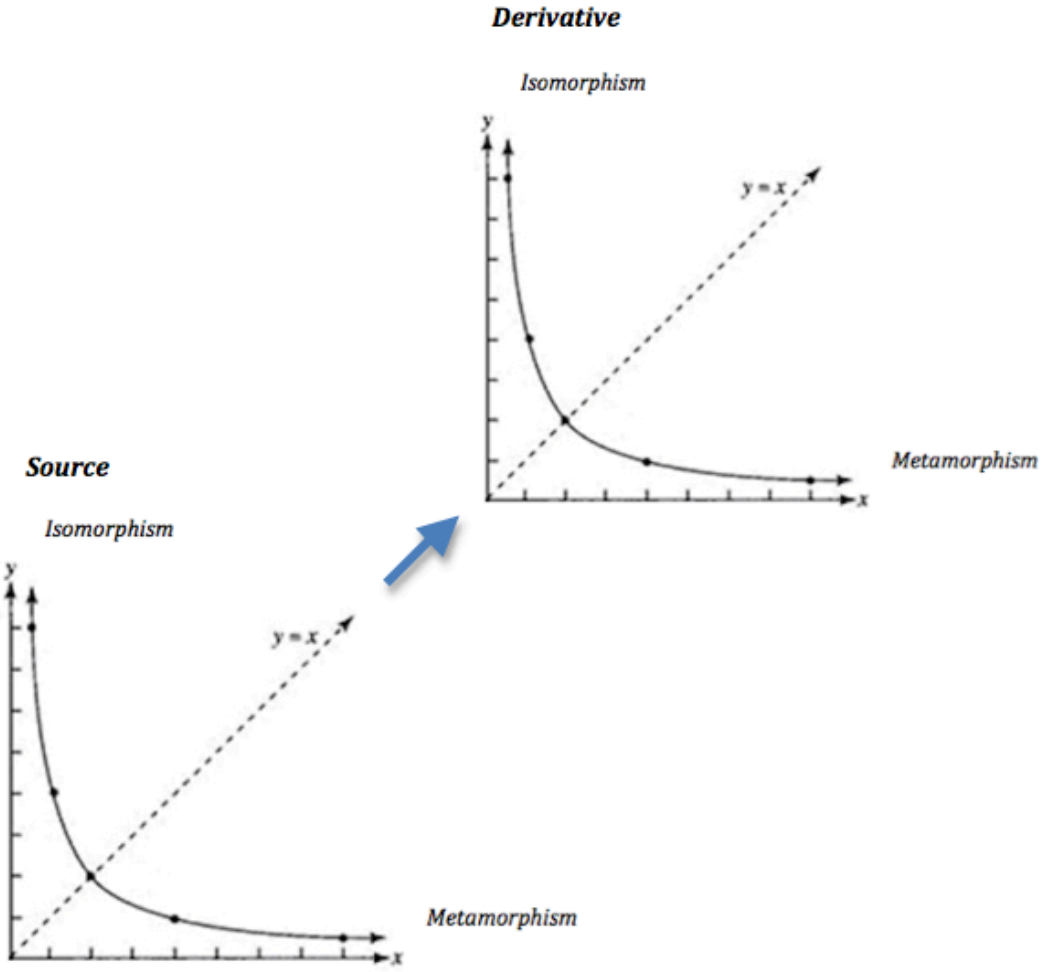
> …a work based on or derived from one or more already existing works. …a 'new edition' of a preexisting work in which the editorial revisions, annotations, elaborations, or other modifications represent, as a whole, an original work.[36]

This more complete definition would certainly preclude mere translation as a sufficient condition for a new song. There was, after all, a popular practice in Francophone areas of Europe and North America during the 1950s-1970s of translating British and American hits directly into French. It is hard to understand how Claude François's "Je veux tenir ta main" ("I Want To Hold Your Hand") could be considered to be an entirely different song from the Beatles' original just because it was in a different language.

[35] http://secondhandsongs.com/wiki/Main/IntroductionToTheDatabase, accessed on 30 March 2015.
[36] http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ14.pdf, accessed on 29 August 2014.

Beyond the issue of the loose definition, “adaptation” is a common word sometimes used as a synonym for covering. “Derivative,” on the other hand, designates nothing else. The word comes from the music industry, just like “cover songs,” and thus represents a category that is recognized and used by the creative agents involved. Figure 2 demonstrates how sources and their derivatives exist in parallel with each other.

Fig. 2 – Sources and Derivatives



The arrow linking both graphs follows the same angle as the “y=x” arrow issuing from the center of the source graph. This is intentional since the musical structures of the source remain almost intact, with only small variations. Thus a derivative, or even a derivative of a

derivative, would continue the "y=x" line; the lyrics change but overall the music does not. By creating a new graph along the arrow, I am arguing that sources and their derivatives represent two sets of *strategies* created by the combination of lyrics and music. Each can then give life to their own sets of covers that ply the asymptotes to similarity and difference. Since there is no question of influence on the derivative, discussing tactics is essentially meaningless. A tactic is reaction, resistance, and subversion; in a derivative there is nothing to resist, rather just raw materials to appropriate into a new song.

The three categories presented above—isomorphic covers, metamorphic covers, and derivatives—are the foundation of this study. At this juncture, it is important to emphasize that the graphs I have presented are meant as conceptual illustrations, not formal methods. I will not be plotting degree of change versus degree of similarity with specific numbers, nor will I be locating songs at specified points along the continuum. I believe that definite values, even if they were possible to assign in the first place, would be red herrings that would risk turning any future discussion toward the falsification or substantiation of the figures and distract attention from the overall purpose my analytical approach. That purpose is to quantitatively *interpret* qualitative changes in order to generally locate the cultural practice of cover songs and derivatives on the graphs above. To make interpretation my central concern is to also recognize the subjectivity inherent in this project. I do not conceive of this as an epistemological weakness, however. I think that the ways in which analytical systems help us navigate uncertainty, conceptualize the amorphous, and articulate the ambiguous are, in fact, some of their most crucial contributions. I mean for this system to do the same. As a framework for understanding the act of song reproduction in a Euro-American context, it is *intended* to be flexible. It is like an

opening in chess, or the proposition of a debate; it is not an end to a conversation, but a beginning.

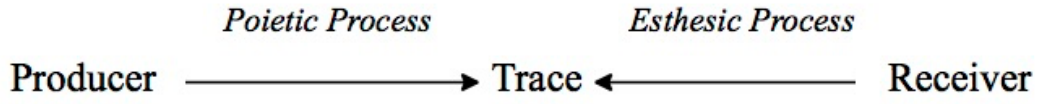
A Semiotics of Strategies and Tactics

The following chapters of this dissertation will present case studies arising from each of the three positions in my theoretical framework. I will illustrate the concept of derivatives with Claude François and Frank Sinatra, while I will illustrate metamorphism and isomorphism, respectively, through examples from Sid Vicious, and Johnny Vegas, and Elvis Presley. In each I will analyze strategies and their repurposing through tactics. Since, by their very definition, tactics are signs, minimally defined as "processes or objects that, to somebody, refer to something," to analyze their deployment in a given version means to engage with music as a signifying system.[37] Strategies signify as well. They create a semiotic field of connotations whose interpretations, while theoretically infinite, are nevertheless bounded. The theory of semiotics is particularly useful in analyzing both since they can be applied to any potential signifier, and thus any number of parameters in a song (music, lyrics, body language, linguistic accent, etc.).

Jean Molino's and Jean-Jacques Nattiez's "tripartition of the musical fact" (Figure 3) offers a compelling model for this kind of analysis because it describes music as a site of both intricate *processes of creation* ("poietic") and a *processes of reception* ("esthesic"). Here, the term "poietic" refers to the act of creation or composition, "trace" refers to the product of the poietic process, usually a score, and "esthesic" refers to the reception of the trace.

[37] The quotation is a slight adaptation from Jean-Jacques Nattiez's summation of Peirce in *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 9.

Fig. 3 – The Nattiez/Molino Musical Tripartition[38]



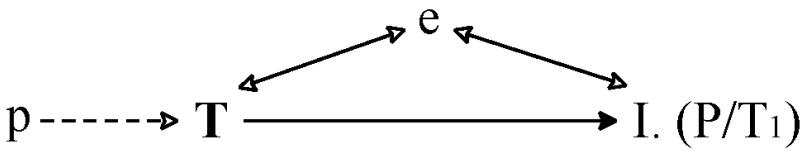
It is not a system of communication *per se*, though communication is one possible outcome. Instead it is a site of negotiation between the intentions of creators and the understanding of the audience.[39] With its emphasis on process, this model fits well with our definition of covering as cultural practice. Furthermore, supplemented with Nattiez's later amendments to his theory, analyses can begin in any part of the model. Nattiez intended, though, that the model be used in its entirety if it was to be used at all; analyses falling short would be incomplete, in his opinion.[40] Thus, the tripartition is a vessel through which many different analytical methods inevitably come into dialogue with each other. By giving voice to the various positions in music's symbolic interactions, we can engage with meaning beyond the limits of each chapter's individual analytical approach, and instead treat meaning as an emergent property of the whole system that cuts across this entire work.

The analytical flexibility afforded by the tripartition is critical in the case of cover songs since variations from an base song can be musical, performative, or contextual. The intertextual nature of covers, in other words, necessitates analyses that are themselves intertextual. That being said, Nattiez's model was primarily intended to account for a score-based trace (sometimes referred to as "material trace" for that reason). With covers, this

[38] Jean Molino, "Musical Fact and the Semiology of Music," trans. J. A. Underwood and Craig Ayrey, *Music Analysis* 9, no. 2 (July 1, 1990): 106; Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 17.
[39] Nattiez explains that what is important to the creator may not translate to the receiver (i.e., a tone row in Schoenberg) who will project their own understanding onto the trace that may have nothing to do with the intentions or procedures of the creator. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 17.
[40] Nattiez makes this point a point in reference to a tendency among certain academics to eschew structural analysis of the neutral level. See Nattiez, *Music and Discourse,* 139-140.

trace is less straightforward. How can we account for media, such as recorded sound or re-performance, that are both trace and performance at the same time? How do we account for a re-performance of an earlier trace that has now itself become a trace? The situation becomes convoluted rather quickly. If we are to appropriate this model to analyze cover songs, it must be re-worked in appearance, if not in underlying semiotic intention. Figure 4 illustrates how the tripartition might be applied to cover songs and derivatives.

Fig. 4 – The tripartition adapted for cover songs

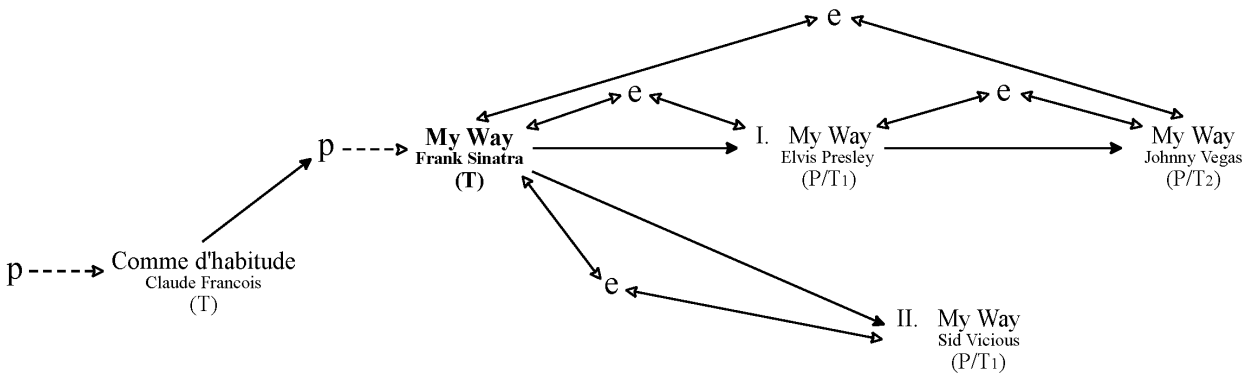


In Figure 4, "**T**" is bold to denote it as the trace of the base song, the cover's strategy, hence the unidirectional arrow that proceeds from it toward the cover (P/T_1). Instead of having separate categories of poiesis and trace, however, I have conflated them into a single term "P/T." This reflects the dual nature of the cover as both site of creation and trace that could be used by another cover (a cover of a cover). The Arabic numeral indicates that this is the first cover of a potential chain of covers, while the Roman numeral denotes the family of cover songs to which covers of P/T_1 (P/T_2, P/T_3, etc.) would belong, should they exist (the chain from Sinatra to Presley and Vegas would be **T** to I. P/T_1 to I. P/T_2). All of the capital letters denote positions in the musical fact that can be directly analyzed through observation. The lower case letters refer to positions that can only be known through other means, such as written records, recollections, ethnographies, and so on. Thus the initial poiesis, or "p," of an base song is not fused with its performance as is the case with covers. Since there is nothing to which to compare it, there is no way of knowing by observation

alone what creative decisions were made during the making of the original. The esthesic level, "e," connects the cover back to the base song, both in the sense of representing the reception of the original by the cover artist, or by the audience and how the reception of the cover changes the reception of the original. Since this position is bi-directional, so are the arrows.

The above example is deliberately straightforward so as to introduce the key concepts as clearly as possible. Figure 5, however, demonstrates the level of complexity inherent the song family of "My Way." Figure 5 is, therefore, also the blueprint for the unfolding of this dissertation. Each chapter will address a part of this diagram and proceed additively, so that, with each succeeding chapter, the analytical universe becomes more complex and rich until all positions in the musical fact are brought into the conversation.

Fig. 5 – The tripartition for the "My Way" song family



Such a process will necessarily draw on methods from and resonate with epistemologies in musicology, ethnomusicology, and cultural studies. It must be clearly stated, however, that I am incorporating inspiration from these cognate fields into a work that I mean to be useful to Western music theorists and popular music studies scholars, of which I am one. As such, the present dissertation focuses on repertoire and methods of musical analysis that

are Euro-American in origin, and the musical materials, cultural categories, and assumptions that come with them. I will begin in Chapter 2 by analyzing the trace, or sound structures, of both the source and its derivative (in other words the songs by François and Sinatra) to understand how a completely different set of lyrics can be convincingly set to almost identical musical structures. In Chapter 3, I will examine the act of poiesis, illustrated in a study of how Sid Vicious's performance tactics change our understanding of the verbal and musical structures of "My Way" and result in a metamorphic cover. Lastly, in Chapter 4, I will consider how J. P. MacDonald attempts to remain faithful to the two base songs that his version of "My Way" draws from, Sinatra and Presley, both in the context of his work as Johnny Vegas, and in the context of himself as an artist. I will combine ethnographic, performance, and structural analysis to understand how, though he performs an isomorphic cover, Johnny Vegas still finds the means of doing it his way.

CHAPTER 2

Derivatives:
How "My Way" and "Comme d'habitude" are Different Songs

> "For me, [Sinatra's recording of "My Way"] was the greatest homage that could have been rendered to me. For the first time, Sinatra chose a French song for a 45 rpm."
> –Claude François[1]

A Semiotics of Strategies: A Theory of Music-Text Signification

Claude François's effusive reception of "My Way" misreads the intention behind its adaptation. Although "My Way" was based on the musical and harmonic foundations of "Comme d'habitude," the lyrics were completely changed. Sinatra's song is not a cover, nor was it meant as homage to François. Instead, it is the derivative of "Comme d'habitude": it is a song that shares the same musical structures but not the same set of lyrics. As I have argued in the previous chapter, a literal translation is insufficient to make a song categorically different (again, the Beatles' "I Want To Hold Your Hand" was not transformed into a different song when Claude François recorded the translation "Je veux tenir ta main"). For a song to be a derivative as the term is used here, the whole lyrical text, and thus the narrative, must change. Other scholars of popular music have contemplated similar ideas about the centrality of words. David Laing (1969), for instance, has suggested that

[1] Fabien Lecoeuvre, *Claude François: Autobiographie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2007): 121.

> … [the] words of a song give us the key to the human universe that the song inhabits, and …the musical signifieds may best be verbalized in a meta-language whose terms refer to the structure of that human universe.[2]

Likewise, Richard Middleton (1990) has argued that words and music are co-creators of meaning since "music and words, as signifying systems, are not simply antithetical; music has a syntagmatic, even narrative aspect, and words have a musical side."[3] If we accept their premises, then it becomes clear that the different human universes of desperation, heartache, and resignation in "Comme d'habitude," and self-assuredness, confidence, and bravado in "My Way" somehow arise from the negotiation of each song's different lyrics with their shared musical trace.

Since derivatives arise when entirely different sets of lyrics are substituted within existing songs, they are related to covers in that they repurpose the musical trace for new expression, but differ in that the new set of lyrics gives them an identity that is independent of the source. The work of this chapter, then, is to understand how "My Way" (which I view as a derivative) uses the musical trace of "Comme d'habitude" (which I view as a source) to set lyrics that open the doors to a different human universe. Since the lyrics are the only major change between them, we therefore must examine those elements that remain constant; put differently, we must examine the musical trace that supports the very different human universes of both songs. This means primarily analyzing melody, rhythm, and harmony, given that it was these structures that Anka had at his disposal on "Comme d'habitude" sheet music he used to write "My Way." Other parameters, such as performance, orchestration, and production, will inevitably come into play in our

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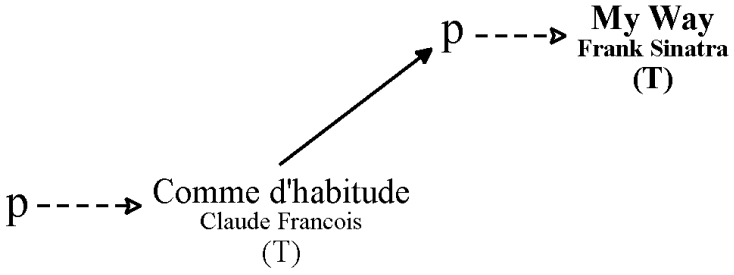
[2] David Laing quoted from *The Sound Of Our Time* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1969): 99 in Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1990): 228.
[3] Richard Middleton makes the point about the difficult relationship between words and music in Middleton, *Studying Popular Music,* 229.

examination. Since these were not central in the transmission from François to Anka, they are of subsidiary concern. The essence of the difference between the songs lies in how the lyrics, melody, rhythm, and harmonies combine to create new meanings.

Among the analytical approaches to musical meaning, Philip Tagg's semiotic methodology for analyzing popular music is one of the most useful for the task at hand. Tagg (1982, 2003) offers an intertextual means of identifying meaningful musical gestures, a theory of figure/ground relationships reflecting the manner in which listeners experience these items through recorded sound, and a falsification process in which different gestures are substituted in order to verify how meanings change, if at all. Though it is not without its drawbacks, as we shall see below, Tagg's focus on uncovering the specific connotations that arise from musical gestures is key to understanding how the music acts as a *strategy* that creates meanings that future covers will accept or change. In the present case of a cover and its derivative, the analysis will show how the combination of music and text results in two different strategies. "My Way" does not reiterate "Comme d'habitude," it repurposes it (Figure 6).

Fig. 6 – Source-Derivative relationship expressed as two separate strategies

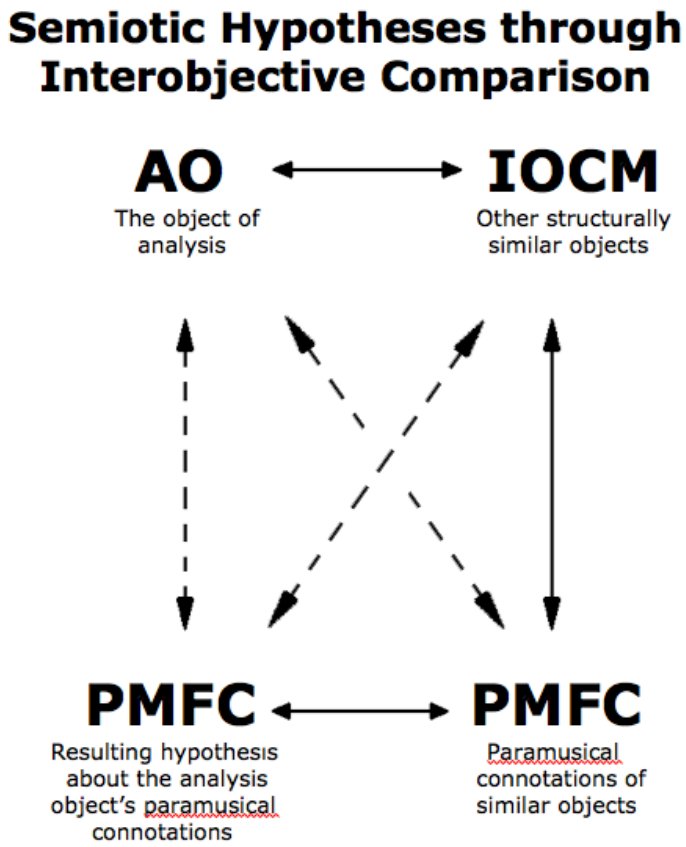


This repurposing can be done because the semiotic field created by the musical gestures in both songs, while infinitely interpretable in theory, is nevertheless bounded by cultural

condinitioning and expectations, so that some interpretations are possible while others are not; some lyrics fit, others do not.

Tagg builds on Deryck Cooke's (1959) fundamental premise that musical gestures connote "non-musical" ideas within a given culture.[4] Tagg calls these gestures *musemes,* which he defines as the minimal units of musical meaning akin to the morpheme in linguistics. His method proceeds by comparing the initial museme to other similar gestures and evaluating their degree of both structural and semiotic similarity.[5] Figure 7 illustrates the process.

Fig. 7 – Tagg's model for Interobjective Comparison[6]



[4] Deryck. Cooke, *The Language of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990): 33.
[5] Philip Tagg, "Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice," *Popular Music* 2 (January 1, 1982): 48.
[6] Philip Tagg and Robert Clarida, *Ten Little Title Tunes: Towards a Musicology of the Mass Media* (New York: Mass Media Music Scholars' Press, 2003): 96, the process is verbally described on pp. 94-99 as well as in Tagg, "Analyzing Popular Music," 49-53.

The first step in his analysis is to find *structural equivalency* between the museme under scrutiny (Analysis Object, or AO) and structurally similar musemes in other stylistically relevant music (Inter-Objective Comparison Materials, or IOCM).[7] The second step is to establish *signification equivalency* between the AO and the IOCM. IOCM are examined for common Para-Musical Fields of Connotation (PMFC) arising from (but not limited to) such considerations as lyrics, title, dramatic usage in opera or film, reception history, style markers, or direct imitation of a phenomenon.[8] Tagg's method establishes *relatedness* and thus admits some degree of variance between the AO and IOCM, as well as among the PMFCs. The analyst's work is to clarify how the similarities relate to each other.

This is a powerful method that makes it possible to argue for the meanings of specific musical structures. The museme, however, presents some difficulties.[9] As Richard Middleton has observed, meaning-carrying units in spoken or written language (morphemes) are constituted by units of sound (phonemes), but, since there is no analogous subsegmental unit in music, there can be no such grammatical level in musical syntax.[10] This criticism lead Tagg to outline a more flexible concept:

> …we posit that [musemes] must be not only audible but also identifiable and (at least approximately) repeatable by members of the same music-making community, and that it must be recognizable as having the same or similar function when it is heard by members of the same community of listeners, even though many members

[7] Tagg uses Franco Fabbri's definitions of style and genre, which broadly delineates them as creating meaningful categories of experience for competent individuals that are specific to musical structure on the one hand, or the music's function in cultural context on the other. See Tagg, *Ten Little Title Tunes*, 96 footnote 3 and 806, 809; Franco Fabbri, "A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications," in David Horn and Philip Tagg, *Popular Music Perspectives: Papers from the First International Conference on Popular Music Research, Amsterdam, June 1981* (Göteborg, Sweden; Exeter [Devonshire]: International Association for the Study of Popular Music, 1982): 52-81

[8] Robert Hatten proposes a similar concept, "correlations," in *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 269.

[9] Tagg has said as much in Tagg and Clarida, *Ten Little Title Tunes*, 94.

[10] Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 181-182.

> of that community may not be conscious of either the structure or its effect...[11]

The above definition closely resembles what Lawrence Kramer (1990) has called a "structural trope."[12] Kramer defines this term as

> ...a structural procedure, capable of various practical realizations that also functions as a typical expressive act within a certain cultural/historical framework. Since they are defined... as units of doing rather than units of saying, structural tropes cut across traditional distinctions between form and content. They can evolve from any aspect of communicative exchange: style, rhetoric, representation, and so on.[13]

He explains that such tropes are part of networks in given expressive environments, and that these networks help shape what Bourdieu (1977) calls the *habitus*, or the ensemble of an individual's dispositions that both are structured by cultural context and structure the individual's experience of everyday life.[14] With their connection to cultural practice, structural tropes are a very promising way to bring the essence of musemes into the theoretical fold of this dissertation. Ethnomusicologist Judith Becker (2004) further nuances the term as the "habitus of listening," which she suggests is

> ...not a necessity nor a rule, but an inclination, a disposition to listen with a particular kind of focus, to expect to experience particular kinds of emotions... and to interpret the meaning of the sounds and one's emotional responses to the musical event in somewhat (never totally) predictable ways.[15]

Thus it is the performers, listeners, and the listening communities that not only repeat the meaningful musical gestures, but that set the conditions and expectations for experiencing meaning in music broadly.

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[11] Tagg and Clarida, *Ten Little Title Tunes*, 94.
[12] This is different from Hatten's concept of "troping," which I call "synthesis," and will be discussed later.
[13] Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990): 10.
[14] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977): 72, 214 (ft. 1).
[15] Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion, and Trancing* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004): 71.

We now have a workable definition for meaningful musical gestures, or what I will henceforth call simply "tropes." As my discussion will demonstrate, these tropes represent typical expressive acts within Euro-American culture, and are audible, identifiable, and repeatable. They are not fixed, but admit a certain amount of variation in their re-presentations. Lastly, since their meanings are culturally negotiated, their reception can be reasonably hypothesized. Finding tropes in music is, therefore, not a matter of trying to parse the inscrutable grammatical levels of music formally, though tropes will certainly embody *some* aspect of musical syntax. Instead it is to look for musical gestures that are considered *marked* by the habitus of listening of a given community, in our case Euro-American popular music listeners.[16] In other words, such gestures are different, unusual, and noticeable with regard to the rest of a given song or that song's style in general. An example would be the major sixth anacrusis that opens the verses of both "My Way" and "Comme d'habitude." Instead of a more conventional and unmarked stepwise line, arpeggio, or repeated note, the melody opens with a wide leap that is an unusual melodic incipit in Euro-American popular songs since 1950. The uncommon nature of the gesture thus gives rise to an expressive intuition that it might have a non-syntactical signification. Providing evidence for the intuition is a matter of structural comparison. The quagmire of structural linguistics can thus be avoided without relinquishing interobjective comparison.

Before proceeding to the first case study, it is important to make three caveats. The first refers to the number of shared tropes. There are four tropes that constitute the main elements of the strategies in "Comme d'habitude" and "My Way," they span large sections of the verse and chorus, and share connotations that support and are transformed by both

[16] Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, 34–36.

sets of lyrics. The tropes are: a rising major sixth melodic anacrusis, a chromatic descending bass line, a cadential double appoggiatura, and a climax constructed out of repeated anacrusis gestures. Meanwhile, there is a fifth trope, a descending diatonic bass line, that exists only in "My Way" and whose presence is driven by the narrative of the new lyrics. While, in a sense, this pulls "My Way" away from the notion that a derivative is the appropriation of the source's music, it nevertheless is an exception that proves the rule. The change is made as part of the *poiesis* of the new song, in response to the new lyrics, not in response to its relationship with "Comme d'habitude." This fifth trope also acts as a second caveat, that all categories in the cover song continuum are fuzzy. That which makes a song isomorphic, metamorphic, or a derivative is the number of traits of a given category it embodies. Members of a cover song category do not need to be paragons. Finally, that the meanings described hereafter are not absolute or inherent cannot be understated. Instead, what follows is a theory of emergent meanings *available* to the listener that create a perimeter around a set of infinite possible interpretations. Derivatives, for their part, transform these meanings by coupling them with new sets of lyrics, using them to open new interpretative possibilities grounded in the same musical structures.

Case Study 1: How different lyrics specify meaning in four tropes shared between Claude François's "Comme d'habitude" (1967) and Frank Sinatra's "My Way" (1969)

Sound Structures

The analysis of the tropes in "My Way" and "Comme d'habitude" will show how the same music gives rise to vastly differing interpretations when combined with different lyrics. I will discuss the tropes as representative of either "figure" or "ground" in order to

clarify their function as immediately audible foreground events on the one hand (melody), and events that, while still audible, nevertheless form a backdrop against which melody and lyrics are delivered (accompaniment and rhythm section).[17] To search for comparison material for "My Way" and "Comme d'habitude" I will limit myself to music by Sinatra (185 songs) and François (56 songs). This self-imposed limitation ensures that the comparison material will be from a body of music relevant to each song (the singers' other works). It will also allow me to go from the particular to the general, since Sinatra's and François's oeuvres are lenses through which the shared cultural codes of mid 20th-century Euro-American popular song can be understood: Sinatra often draws from the Great American Songbook and François from French covers of many Top-40 English-language songs of the 1960s and 70s.[18] These two singers' repertoires and their constituent musical gestures, which more often than not share roots in the European tonal music tradition, came into increasing contact as the Jet Age gained momentum and globalization's pace irrevocably accelerated in the 1960s.[19]

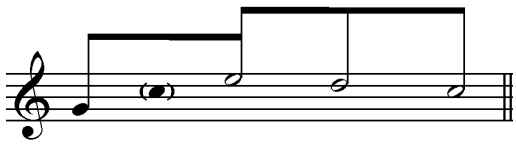
Trope 1 – "Sentimental" Sixths (figure)[20]

The opening vocal interval of "My Way" and "Comme d'habitude" is a rising major sixth that sets the words "And now" and "Je'm lève" ("I get up"). This major sixth appears as a figure (vocal melody), as an upbeat at the beginning of the verses, and in a moderate

[17] See Tagg, "Analysing Popular Music," 53
[18] For a complete list of songs and sources, see Appendix 1.
[19] For example, "Summer Wind" was originally written by Germans Hans Bradtke and Henry Mayer and performed by 1963 EuroVision contestant Grethe Ingmann in 1965. It was recorded by Wayne Newton later that year before Sinatra picked it up in 1966. Likewise, François's output consists of songs from a variety of sources including French, Italian, British, and American popular music, as well as country and western hits.
[20] The names I give to each trope are meant to evoke the mirth and playfulness of the names Tagg gives to his musemes, and as such are in homage to him. Quotation marks are meant as reminders that the meanings are ascribed to the music by social convention, they do not inhere.

tempo (around 78 bpm) It also has the important syntactic function as the initial ascent to the fundamental line and is thus further defined as being a rise from 5 to 3. The initial ascent is considered to be "a basic conceptual contrast to the fundamental line," but since it leaps up the entire distance in a single interval, it is a phenomenological contrast as well:[21]

Ex. 1 – "Sentimental" sixths



Paradigm

Regardless of what happens later, this moment where 5 reaches up to 3 has both a syntactical meaning, since it puts into motion the whole melodic progression of the song, and a semantic meaning, since it creates a phenomenological melodic gesture that is unusual in Euro-American popular music and therefore is marked.

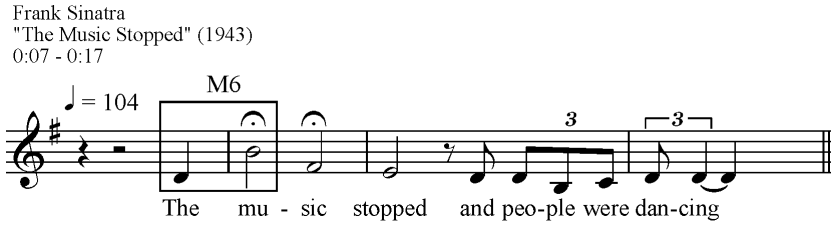
Examples 2a-2e show all five of the phrase-beginning $\hat{5}$-$\hat{3}$ major-sixth anacruses from the songs I researched. There were no instances of major sixths that began phrases with different scale degrees (i.e., $\hat{1}$-$\hat{6}$). With the exception of "Young At Heart," which uses a brief accented neighbour tone, the leaps are always direct and in a comfortable baritone register not exceeding C4 (past which point Sinatra's tone becomes more strident). This lower register allows Sinatra to deliver the opening lines of each song at their prevailing medium to low volumes with ease and relaxation. Each instance of this major sixth is also in a low to mid-tempo ballad ranging from 63 to 104 bpm, though most cluster at around 80 bpm. The leisurely feel allows the initial sixth to be heard more clearly and with more

[21] Heinrich Schenker, trans. Ernst Oster and Oswald. Jonas, *Free Composition (Der Freie Satz): Volume III of New Musical Theories and Fantasies*, Longman Music Series (New York: Longman, 1979), 45.

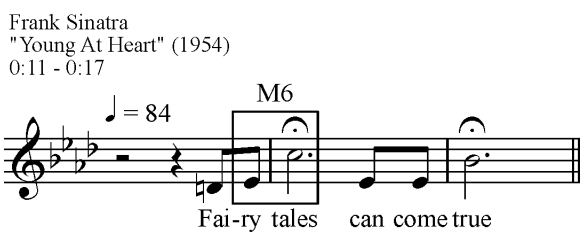
emphasis than at a faster tempo. In fact, in two instances, the interval is part of a pause that draws particular attention to itself by suspending forward rhythmic motion.

Ex. 2 – Major 6ths as initial upbeats in Frank Sinatra recordings

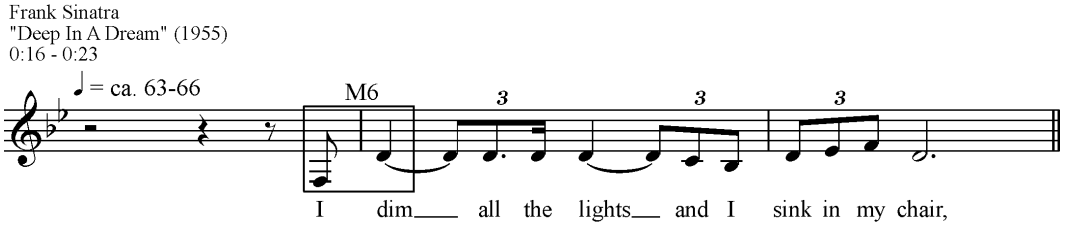
a)



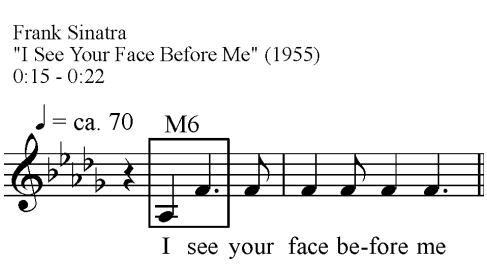
b)



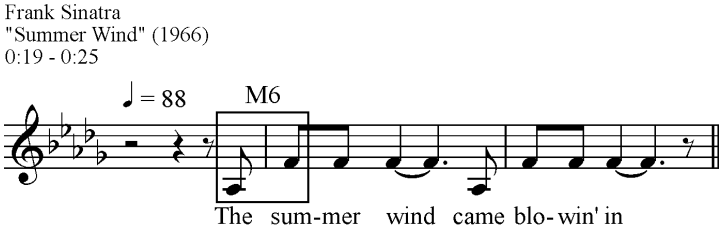
c)



d)



e)



This establishes an intimate atmosphere reflective of an inner monologue rather than an external narrative told to a crowd.[22]

Intimate recollection is a central part of the character of the lyrics set to this gesture. In "My Way," the lyric "And now, the end is near and so I face the final curtain" is addressed to a singular friend in the next line.[23] Likewise, the lyric "I see your face before me," from the song by the same title, addresses a singular other, but one who is not present. "The summer wind came blowin' in from across the sea" from "Summer Wind," and "I dim all the lights and sink in my chair" from "Deep In A Dream" appear to address no one in particular and serve as inner monologues that recalls remembered moments. Being young at heart, just like the acknowledgment that the end is near, implies age, the memory of youth, and the examination of one's life. Seeing someone's face or dreaming of them is an act of remembrance every bit as much as retelling a story about the summer wind. Each of these cases casts memory in a pleasant light, as something both desirable and intimate, something to help celebrate life, to help escape current misery, or to simply indulge in for a time. Thus, the major sixths used to set these texts are correlated with *nostalgia,* the pleasant recollection of the now inaccessible past.

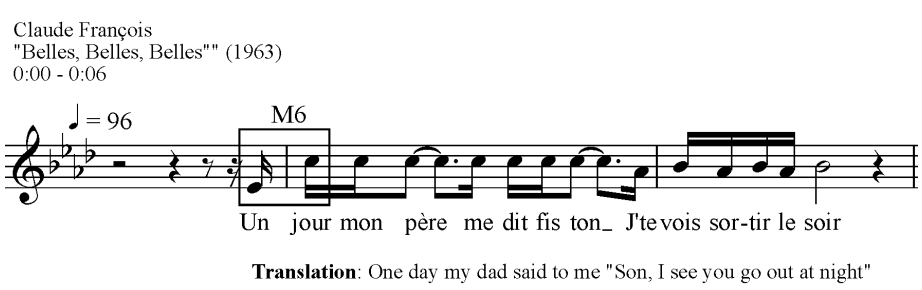
Claude François's songs also feature the interval in similar contexts to Sinatra's: four out of 56 songs began in the same way as "Comme d'habitude" and "My Way." There are a few differences, however (see Ex. 3). Tempo markings are about 10-15 bpm faster

[22] Burns and Woods argue that the voice can have multiple and shifting subject positions in a given song. Lori Burns and Alyssa Woods, "Authenticity, Appropriation, Signification: Tori Amos on Gender, Race, and Violence in Covers of Billie Holiday and Eminem," *Music Theory Online* 10, no. 2 (June 2004): 7.
[23] Given that the friend is referenced only once and shortly after recognizing that the end is near, it is tempting to think that the protagonist is addressing death. This possibility is intriguingly supported by the harp arpeggios, which have a long association, in this broader cultural context, with death dating to at least the 19th century. See Daniel Beller-McKenna, "Distance and Disembodiment: Harps, Horns, and the Requiem Idea in Schumann and Brahms," *The Journal of Musicology* 22, no. 1 (March 1, 2005): 47–89.

than in Sinatra, note values are shorter, and François's vocal range is that of a tenor as compared to Sinatra's baritone. The different target audiences can account for the changes in tempo. Where Sinatra was generally appealing to pre-WWII and pre-rock generations in the United States, François spoke to the youth of the post-war, rock'n'roll-influenced baby boomer generation in France. This dichotomy between age and youth is reproduced in their voices.

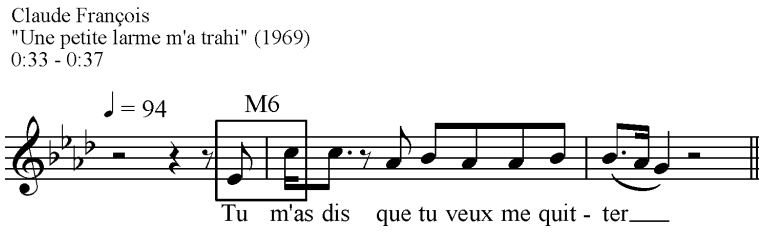
Ex. 3 – Major 6ths as initial upbeats in Claude François recordings

a)



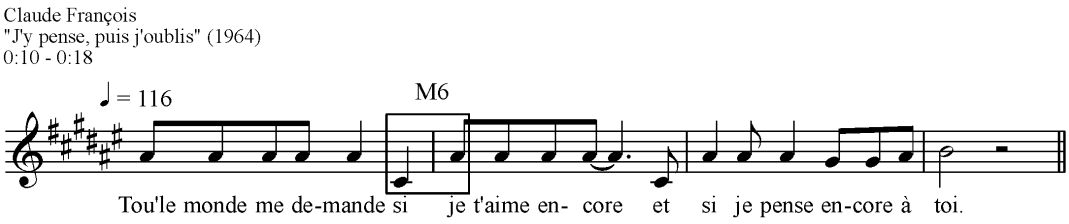
Translation: One day my dad said to me "Son, I see you go out at night"

b)

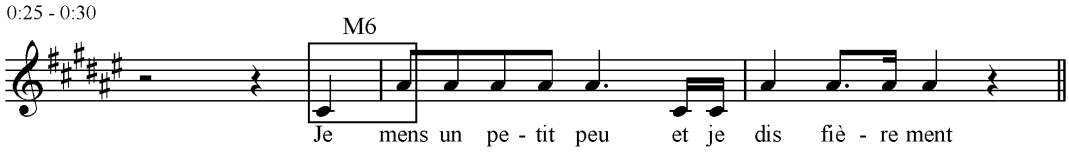


Translation: You told me you wanted to leave me

c)

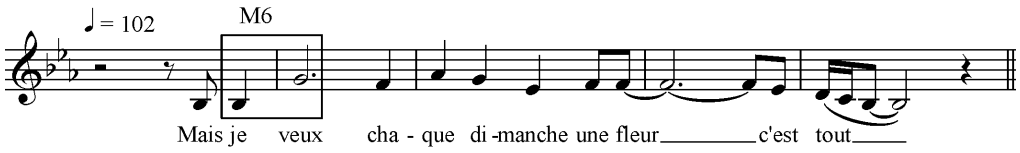


Translation: Everyone asks me if I still love you and if I still think of you.



Translation: I lie a little and proudly say (that that story is finished)

d) Claude François
"Je veux chaque dimanche une fleur" (1967)
0:43 - 0:47



Translation: But every Sunday I want a flower, that's all

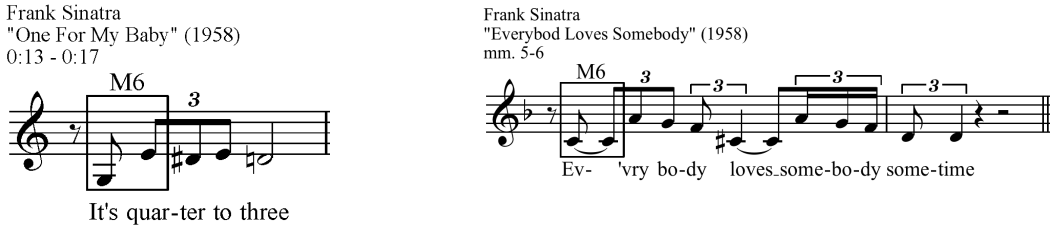
The baritone embodies the older, more experienced man, as well as the "Greatest Generation"'s preference for baritone singers such as Bing Crosby and Nat "King" Cole. On the other hand, taken with the faster tempi and shorter note values of his songs, François's higher tenor communicates a greater energy that, along with the lyrics, conveys a sense of youthfulness.

What structural divergences can be observed between the paradigm of the "sentimental" sixth and its realizations in Ex. 3 are minor in contrast to what Ex. 3 shares with Ex. 2. Despite different voice types, each singer performs in the same vocal register (again, not exceeding C4). François's tenor gains a relaxed and effortless quality similar to Sinatra's in this register. Along with "Comme d'habitude," the examples also share similar affects: the protagonist recalls a conversation with his father in "Belles, Belles, Belles" ("Girls, Girls, Girls"); the protagonist admits that—despite outward appearances—he misses his partner in "Une petite larme m'a trahi," ("A Small Tear Betrayed Me"); a heartbroken narrator vacillates between memories of his former lover and trying to forget her painful memory in "J'y pense et puis j'oublis" ("I Think About It And Then I Forget"); and in "Je veux chaque dimanche une fleur" ("Every Sunday I Want A Flower"), a jilted lover considers his own death and asks of his former lover a flower on his grave each Sunday. Once again, themes of memory, the passage of time, and longing are present, though they have slightly different flavour. The greater emphasis on youthful experience can be

witnessed through themes like lost love, melodramatic teenage fantasies about a tragic death, and remembered conversations with fathers, all set to up-tempo light rock music.

The verses in "Comme d'habitude" and "My Way," as well as their comparison material, cluster around concepts of nostalgia, loss, age, and sentimentality. The lyrics, however, impart distinctly different flavours to these concepts: the hopeless nostalgia for the glory days of a now failing relationship, on the one hand, and the triumphant nostalgia looking back on a life well lived on the other. These meanings are conveyed principally by the association of each set of lyrics with the rising $\hat{5}$-$\hat{3}$ major sixth, and with support from the moderate-to-slow tempi, the low volume and the low and relaxed vocal registers of each song. It is, therefore, a solid hypothesis that this vocal sixth is a kind of marker evoking nostalgia: a relaxed, pleasurable, and wistful backward look.[24] The remaining question is the importance of the anacrusis. There are a two from my Sinatra sample that start with a $\hat{5}$-$\hat{3}$ major sixth that is not anacrustic:

Ex. 4 – $\hat{5}$-$\hat{3}$ sixths in different rhythmic positions



[24] It is quite possible that this applies more broadly than to the repertoire cited. The reasons for this are manifold and complex, and beyond the scope of the current study, but may be briefly summarized as follows: The interval seems to have been quite common in 19th-century Euro-American popular music and thus might connote a sense of "old" with respect to mid-20th century sensibilities that would still remember its frequent usage. It is found especially in British light opera from the 1830s-1850s whose arias were famous throughout Europe. It is also commonly found in such sentimental pieces as Chopin's *Nocturne in Eb Op. 9 No. 2* (ca. 1830-2, and so often on "Classical Music For Lovers" albums), Liszt's *Liebesträume* (1850), and one of the old college songs Brahms quotes in the *Akademische Festouvertüre* (1880), among many others. The gesture can even be traced as far back as the 18th-century English folk song "My Bonnie Lies Over The Ocean" in which it is still used in a context of longing. More research into the storied history of this vocal interval is planned. For more on the issue of markers as opposed to labels when discussing musical meaning, see Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven,* 250.

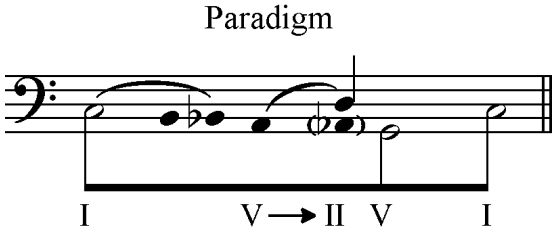
In "One For My Baby," the narrator talks intimately to a bartender about his recently dissolved relationships, and in "Everybody Loves Somebody," the narrator addresses his would-be lover, telling them that after a long while of waiting, he feels his moment to love has arrived. These examples both exhibit the same tendencies described earlier: low range, relaxed voice, moderate to slow tempo. In a similar fashion to the other comparison materials cited above, they use these structures to support texts about memory and nostalgia. The anacrusis, it would seem, is not important to the $\hat{5}$-$\hat{3}$ sixth's meaning. What is important is that which cannot be replaced without losing something of the original: the vocal timbre of the low register, the ascent to the fundamental line, the moderate tempo, and the space stretching between $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{3}$. Within this construction of leisurely recollection, both the source and derivative set texts that interact, albeit differently, with the same ideas: nostalgia, wistfulness, sentimentality, introspection, quiet, low, slow. The "sentimental" sixth reaches with comfortable and consonant futility to catch longed-for moments buried by time.[25]

Trope 2 – Bass Line of "Chromatic Loss" (Ground)

Beginning underneath the initial ascending vocal major sixth of the verses in both Sinatra and François, there is a bass counterpoint that carries a rich connotative history. The prototype is a slow descending chromatic line starting on I, often going through a short tonicization of II, to V—outlining a descent from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{5}$ in the bass. Best known as the bass line in "When I am laid in earth" from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (1688), this trope has had a long existence.

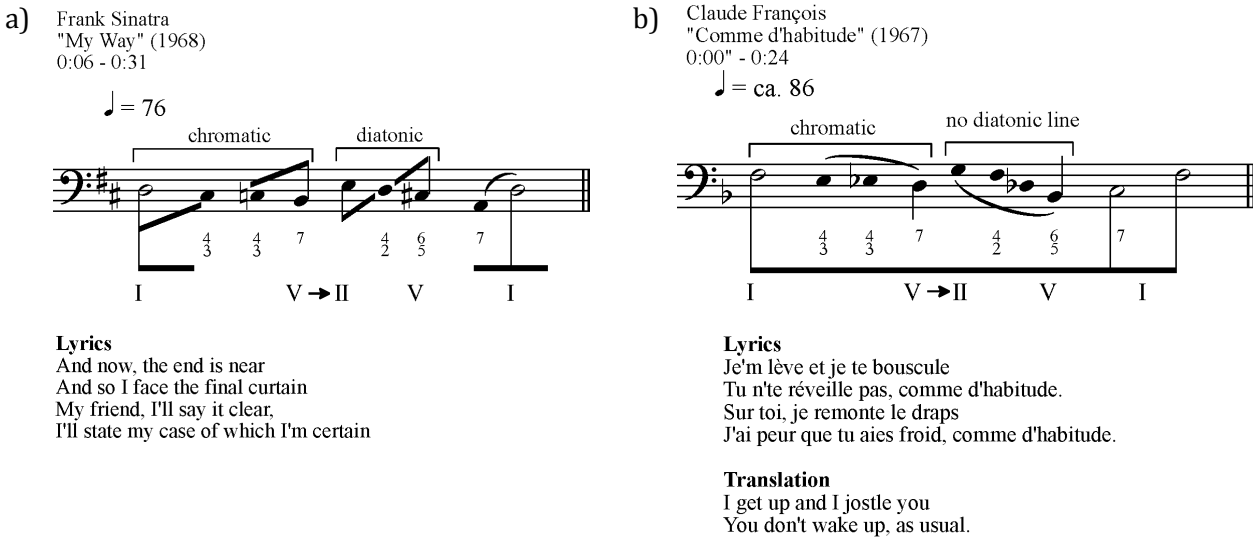
[25] Robert Hatten has also described yearning as an upward motion. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven,* 57.

Ex. 5 – Bass line of "chromatic loss"



It has been described by semiotician Raymond Monelle (1997) as "heavy with symbolicality... an immemorial token of grief, shame and penitence."[26] Peter Williams (1997) and Alex Ross (2010) have both delved into the bass line's four-hundred-year history and written about its remarkable proliferation and staying power in European and North American music.

Ex. 6 – Bass reductions of "My Way" and "Comme d'habitude"



Alex Ross notes two separate transmissions of the trope to North American popular music in the early 20th century: through Tin Pan Alley, whose composers were frequently Russian Jews steeped in European classical music, and the blues. By way of these influences, he

[26] Richard Monelle, quoted in Peter Williams, *The Chromatic Fourth during Four Centuries of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 247.

arrives at Sinatra, finding that the 1950s "downcast" concept album triptych of *In The Wee Small Hours* (1955), *Only The Lonely* (1958), and *No One Cares* (1959) "seemed to require morose chromatic lines to set the tone."[27] Example 6 shows the trope in François and Sinatra.

As to the trope's affect, Ross is categorical when he states that "[t]here's something claustrophobic about those close-set intervals: they give the feeling of a dismal shuffle, the gait of a lost soul."[28] Williams, on the other hand, is a bit more reserved in his expressive analysis of the trope. Although he recognizes in it a certain characteristic sadness and resignation, he believes the gesture to be too loosely coded to have any specific and concrete meaning on its own.[29] It has semantic significance through its association to a libretto in *Dido and Aeneas*, but simply syntactical significance in Bach's more "absolute" *Prelude and Fugue in A♭ Major BWV 886* (1742).[30] That being said, Williams still identifies the trope in Art Tatum's "Moonglow" (1934) and Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Corcovado" (1960), and links it to the *Affekt* of melancholy.[31]

There is a consistent problem of structural level and morphology with the approaches both Williams and Ross bring to the chromatic line. Neither discusses the precise syntactic context in which the chromatic lines they are analyzing are found. Williams examines the "chromatic fourth" as a rising *or* descending line in the melody *or* the bass, while Ross remains unclear as to exactly how functional a lament pattern must be in order for it to be relevant (i.e. can a series of non-harmonic tones count as a lament?).[32]

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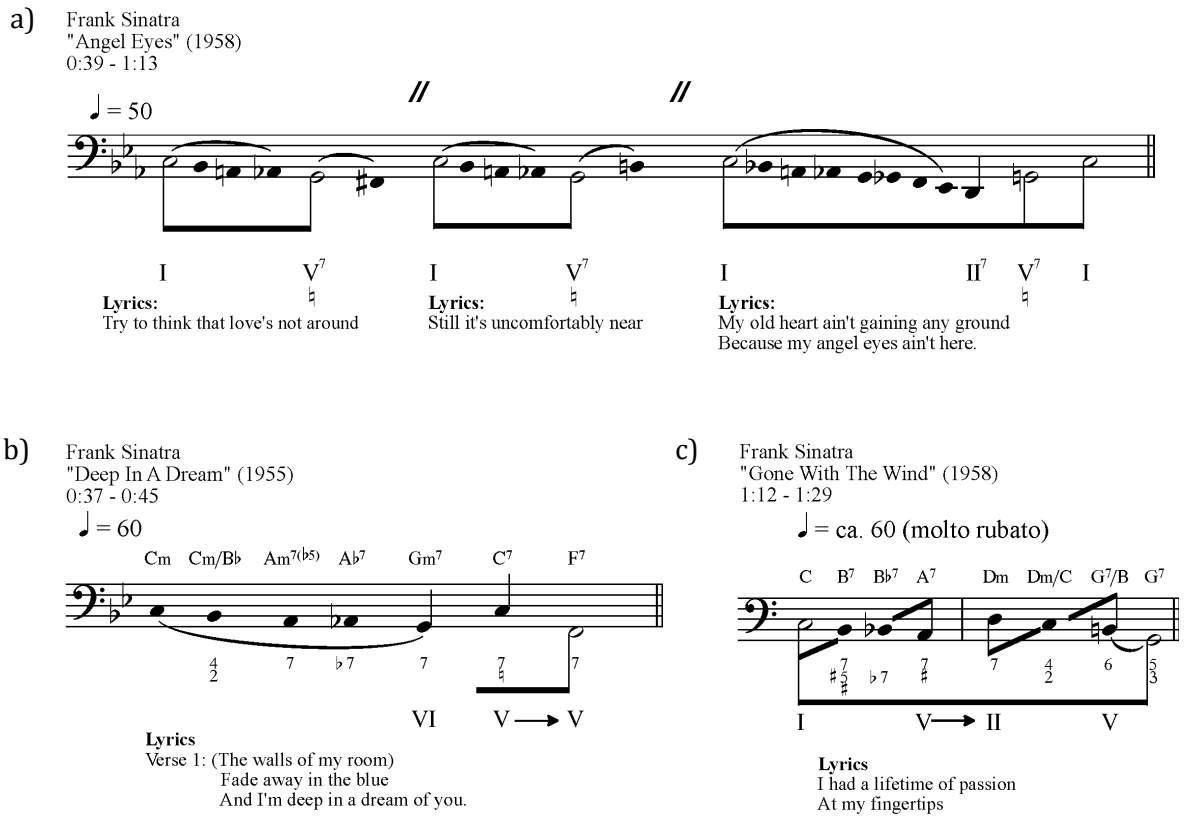
[27] Alex Ross, *Listen to This* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010): 50-52.
[28] Ibid., 37.
[29] Williams, *The Chromatic Fourth During Four Centuries of Music*, 247.
[30] Ibid., 248.
[31] Ibid., 237.
[32] Ibid., 1.

Without properly constraining what can be considered a legitimate signifying use of the fourth, both authors fall into the same trap while drawing different conclusions. Where Ross can be seen as too willing to read meaning into non-structural gestures, Williams is too reticent to read meaning into structural ones regardless of their consistent use.

As discussed earlier, a trope must be both structurally salient *and* marked.[33] It is therefore clear that the lamenting motif is not any chromatic line irrespective of voice or function. Instead it is a *harmonized descending chromatic bass* that moves between I and V.

Ex. 7 – Descending chromatic bass lines in Sinatra's music



Although there are many versions of the chromatic scale that appear throughout the bass lines of Sinatra's repertoire, Example 7 represents the only ones that match the specific

[33] This is a similar point to one made by Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, 167.

tonic-dominant description of the trope while maintaining a similar tempo to "My Way." "Angel Eyes" is a bleak song that negotiates the two-sided personality of a bon vivant buying drinks for everyone at the bar on one hand, and a depressed and bitter spurned lover hinting that he is contemplating either murder of his competition, suicide, or both. The chromatic descent underscores each verse when he speaks in an internal voice, entertaining his darker thoughts. This song differs from "My Way" in its use of the minor mode and in its unmediated descent to V (there is no secondary dominant), except for the last couplet of each verse, which extends the chromatic descent down to $\hat{2}$. In a chromatic descent, mode plays a colouristic rather than functional role. In either major or minor, the bass remains the same. This is made clearer by observing the next two songs, "Deep In A Dream" and "Gone With The Wind." Both of these bear a closer resemblance to "My Way" in that they are in major and get to V through the VI-II-V fifth progression. "Gone With The Wind" also reproduces diatonic elements in "My Way," an issue to which I will return. Despite being in major and detouring around the relentless chromatic fall to V, both of these songs are about loss. As we saw earlier, "Deep In A Dream" is about a man recollecting the face of his lost lover. Here, the chromatic descent initiates the cadence at the end of the verse, and underscores such words of loss as "And we'll love anew, as we used to do, when I'm deep in a dream of you."

In "Gone With The Wind," the chromatic descent appears with words only once, when the singer observes: "I had a lifetime of heaven at my fingertips." This moment of regret contrasts with the rest of the song that wistfully observes the passing on of the protagonist's romance. In this moment, there is the sense that the protagonist could have done more but did not. Orchestration also sets this moment apart. From the beginning, the

song is a fragmented collection of instrumental timbres, including a very Debussy-like harp and flute duo, smatterings of string padding, and double reed chorale textures. The lead-up to the chromatic bass sets up both the first authentic cadence of the song, clarifying what had been an ambiguous tonality up until that point, and also leads to a sustained string chorale that makes the duration of the trope the song's most lyrical, sustained, and cohesive moment. The chorale is never again heard in the song and neither is the bass line.

Orchestration knits together the three songs above. Each is underscored by low string padding and, if any other instruments are involved (as the flute is in "Angel Eyes" at 0:55), they are also in their very lowest registers. The only main difference is that the *arco* bass of "Deep In A Dream" and "Gone With The Wind" is replaced by pizzicato that is kept in the foreground of the mix in "Angel Eyes," while the string padding is left in the background, creating an emptier sound. None of the descending basses are played at more than a *mezzo piano* dynamic and thus are never part of a song's climax; the voice's register only exceeds C4 once to D4 in "Angel Eyes" and, appropriately, on the words "Still it's uncomfortably clear." Lastly, the tempi of each passage are all in the mid-to-slow range, varying between 60 and 76 bpm. The quiet, slow arrangement of sustained strings, by virtue of its long usage in Hollywood films, among other venues, thus shades the sense of loss presented by the chromatic line as one involving sincere "deep feelings."[34]

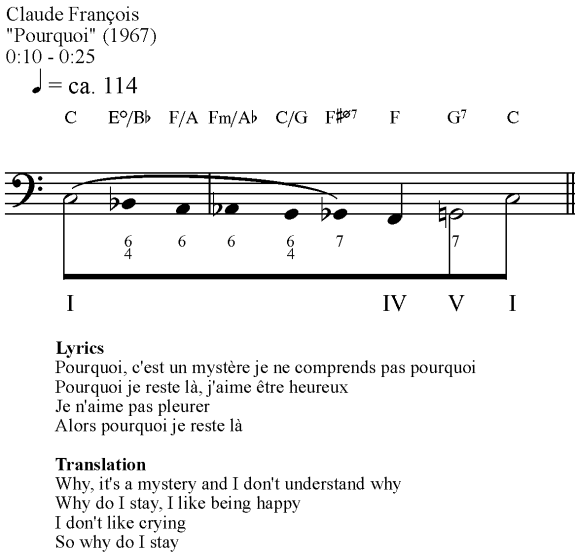
The source, "Comme d'habitude," also has some comparison material from Claude François's other recordings (Example 8). The two songs that use a descending chromatic bass line between I and V also set lyrics with themes similar to those in the derivative

[34] Tagg refers to such string padding, a hallmark of Hollywood film scores practically from the beginning of sound films, as connoting "love" and "deep feelings," categories entirely supported by the Sinatra songs above. See Philip Tagg, *Fernando the Flute: Analysis of Musical Meaning in an Abba Mega-Hit* (Mass Media Music Scholars" Press, 2001): 46, and 46 footnote 27.

above. In “Pourquoi” (“Why,” a derivative of “Baby Now That I've Found You” [1967] by The Foundations), the singer rhetorically wonders why he stays in a relationship that is bad for him with a woman to whom he is not attracted. In “C’est de l’eau, c’est du vent” (“It’s water, it’s wind”) the singer reflects on the things in life that cannot be held onto: friends, lovers, youth, achievements, and life itself.

Ex. 8 – Descending chromatic bass lines in François’s music

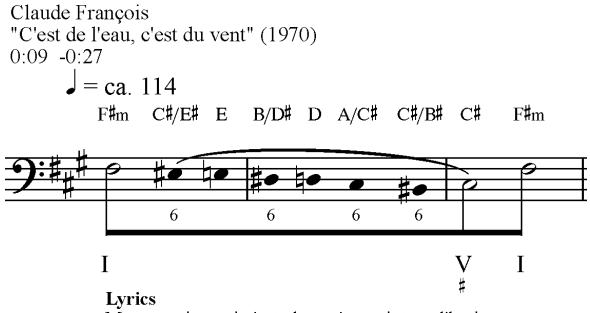
a)



Lyrics
Pourquoi, c'est un mystère je ne comprends pas pourquoi
Pourquoi je reste là, j'aime être heureux
Je n'aime pas pleurer
Alors pourquoi je reste là

Translation
Why, it's a mystery and I don't understand why
Why do I stay, I like being happy
I don't like crying
So why do I stay

b)

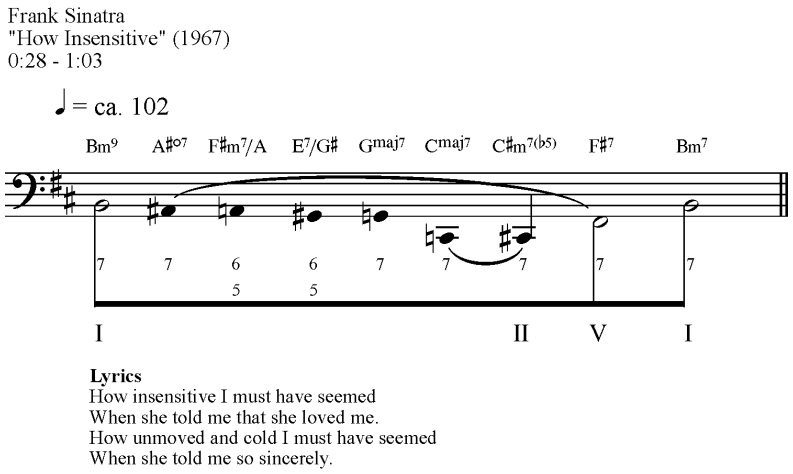


Lyrics
Mon premier ami n'est plus qu'un point sur l'horizon
Mon premier amour n'a déjà plus de nom
Et quand je regarde la photo de ce petit garçon
Je reconnais à peine mon visage

Translation
My first friend is but a point on the horizon
My first love no longer has a name
And when I look at the photo of that small boy
I barely recognize my own face

The musical settings are dissimilar in terms of tempo and orchestration. At ca. 114 bpm, both songs are significantly faster than “Comme d’habitude” (84 bpm). As described in the major-sixth section, this does give the music more drive and certainly a more energetic and youthful character than the almost lugubrious Sinatra examples. The issue of how much tempo affects meaning, however, seems to be open to debate in this case. Below is an example of a Sinatra song that is closer to the tempi of the François comparison material:

Ex. 9 – An up-tempo descending chromatic bass in Sinatra



It is quite clear that the tempo here has only a marginal effect on the affect of the chromatic bass. The lyrics recount final moments of a relationship in which the man says nothing to his now ex-lover as she tells him she loves him and leaves. His regret comes through in self-defensive lines as "What was I to say? What can you say when a love affair is over?" "How Insensitive" maintains the same feeling as much of the Sinatra comparison material by virtue of its many other similarities: low string padding, low vocal register, slow vocal deliver (giving the illusion of a slow tempo), and, of course, the chromatic descent in the guitar and bass. Likewise, the orchestration, rather than the tempo, accounts for the more buoyant mood of "Pourquoi" and "C'est de l'eau." Absent is the "serious emotional" string padding, the low vocal register (A4 is François's registral ceiling), and the mostly quiet dynamics. In "Pourquoi," the instrumentation is altered from the original Foundations song to sound even more like the Motown sound (unison piano, saxophone, and bass with brass shots), while the piano, bass, and vibraphone texture in "C'est de l'eau" is more generally coded. In both cases, though, the verses are underscored by vocal padding in the form of overdubbed vocal tracks and a boy's choir, respectively. The latter is meant as a foil to the

experienced and world-weary voice of the chromatic bass verses, and offers an optimistic outlook on the transience of life.

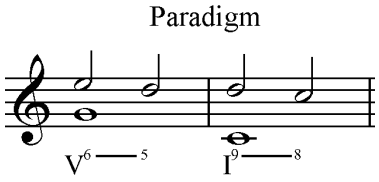
The above songs, along with the others that did not fit my strict criteria ("Corcovado," "Bonita," "Someone To Watch Over Me," "Too Close For Comfort," "Eloïse"), demonstrate that the possible shadings of the trope are probably endless. To further the point, since "Pourquoi" is also a derivative, we can consider its source to round out the picture of the chromatic bass trope. Although the lyrics of "Baby, Now That I've Found You" are unrelated to the French lyrics of "Pourquoi," they nevertheless deal with a man pleading with his lover not to leave him, and this pleading happens in the chorus over the descending chromatic bass. Regardless of their specific presentation, however, the comparisons above strongly argue that the core connotation of the I-V descending chromatic bass is loss, while the exact nature of that loss, whether loss of love or eventual loss of life, is a matter illustrated by the lyrics. That the bass lines are not always structurally identical does not derail the argument. Ellen Rosand has described this trope as a symbol, only part of which is sufficient to access the whole.[35] This holds true for the examples above despite the preservation of the I-V motion in all of them: the manner in which each version of the trope is presented, and the specific route each takes to get to V admits some degree of variation. The almost identical musical paths the trope takes in "Comme d'habitude" and "My Way" connect, through different lyrics, with the trope's emergent meaning as seen in the comparison material, and thus point to two distinct, yet distantly related human universes.

[35] Ellen Rosand has spoken about the evolution of the descending chromatic line from functional bass to symbol, only a part of which is sufficient to access the meaning of the whole. See Ellen Rosand, "The Descending Tetrachord: An Emblem of Lament," *The Musical Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (July 1, 1979): 357.

Trope 3 – Appoggiatura Chain "Pathos" (figure)

Appoggiatura chains, which can be defined as the sequential presentation of on-beat dissonances with off-beat resolutions, occur at the end of the verse phrases in "My Way" and "Comme d'habitute" to the words "I did it my way" and "Oui, comme d'habitude" ("Yes, as usual"). In both cases, the chain happens over a strong cadential 6/4, at last fulfilling the promise of the mild mid-verse cadence earlier in the phrase:

Ex. 10 – Appogiatura Chain



The dissonances are like reminders of the pain embodied by the more complex chromatic chords at the opening of the verse, now transformed, softened, and even made pleasurable by their context in clear concluding harmonic functions. These appoggiature can thus be thought of as reminders of the close connection between pleasure and pain, aesthetic and otherwise.[36]

There is no dearth of literature on the affect of suspensions in Western music. In *Fernando the Flute*, Tagg states that "appoggiature [at slow to moderate tempi] tend to increase the grace, pathos, and general expressive content of a melodic line..."[37] Though he refers specifically to chains of appoggiature in Baroque and Rococo music in this passage, he nevertheless traces the trope's usage from C. P. E Bach's *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* (1753) through Viennese classicism, 19th-century sentimental

[36] Philosopher Marcia Muelder Eaton has said that "referring to experiences as aesthetically pleasing is misleading only if one thinks all pleasures are accompanied by grinning faces." Marcia Muelder Eaton, "Aesthetic Pleasure and Pain," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31, no. 4 (July 1, 1973): 485.
[37] Tagg, *Fernando the Flute*, 43, 44.

ballads, and all the way to 1970s country music.[38] Just as we encountered with Ross and Williams in the previous section, however, there are morphological issues with Tagg's sample. He uses examples of appoggiature that rise as well as fall, and does not further circumscribe his sample by specifying harmonic intervals, melodic scale degrees, harmonic function, or semantic position. This last point, it became clear in my transcription work with the Sinatra and François oeuvres, is also crucial in evaluating the emotional reactions such gestures are meant to elicit. Sinatra's music in particular uses many appoggiature, both in vocal and instrumental parts, in a number of different positions within a phrase.[39] To have appoggiature at the end of a phrase, however, along with progressions that create strong expectations of harmonic and melodic closure, gives these gestures a greater sense of repose than others. Tagg may well be correct, all appoggiature may indeed heighten the affect of a given gesture, but semantic position will alter what meanings each suspension might evoke. In the case of "My Way" and "Comme d'habitude," I contend that they evoke *consolation* since the dissonances are gentle and in the framework of a V-I resolution at a phrase ending. To be sure, the consolation offered in each is not the same. François seems to find an ironic consolation in the persistence of the usual lovelessness of his relationship, while Sinatra finds consolation in the fact that, despite some regrets, he did it his way.

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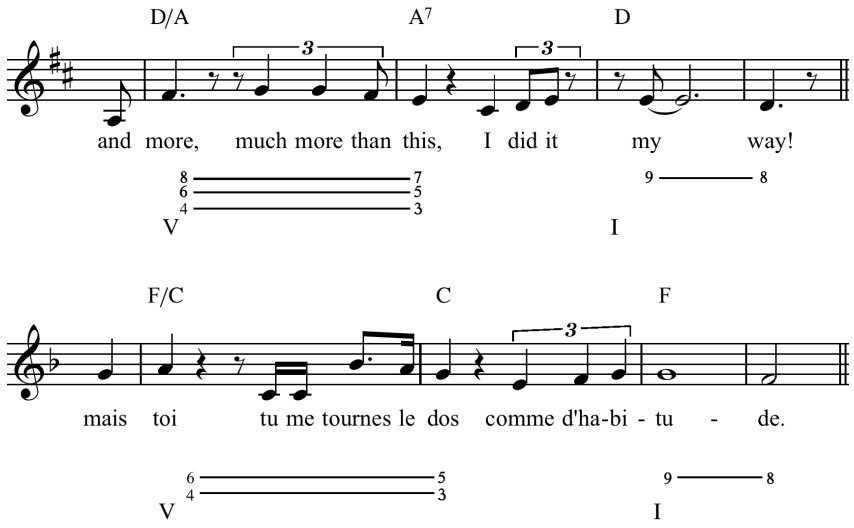
[38] Comparison material includes arias from J. S. Bach, Lully, Gluck, and Handel, Beethoven's "Ghost" Sonata (Op. 31, no. 2), Schubert's "Auf dem Wasser zu singen," and Merle Haggard's "You're Walking On The Fighting Side Of Me" among others. See Tagg, *Fernando the Flute,* 43-46.

[39] Sinatra's music is rife with suspensions in the *instrumental* parts. Examples of this can be found in "Here's That Rainy Day," "Why Try To Change For Me Now?" "The One I Love," "Last Night When We Were Young," "Three Coins In A Fountain," "I've Got You Under My Skin," "The Charms of You," and many others. It is intriguing to consider that the more emotionally charged suspensions are elements of the ground, rather than the figure, because they demonstrate an emotionalism out of step with 1960s masculinity. Thus, they would connect to the mixed masculinity authors like Karen McNally have identified in Sinatra's film work; on the surface an alpha-male personality, always in control, but concealing a vulnerable, emotional and far less stereotypically male interior. See Karen McNally, *When Frankie Went to Hollywood: Frank Sinatra and American Male Identity* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008): 90-170.

For our purposes, the specific definition of the trope as shown in Example 10 will be the basis of our comparison before we examine possible alternatives: the appogiatura chain is in the voice: a 6-5 suspension over dominant harmony followed by a 9-8 suspension over tonic harmony. The voice is in its lower tessitura at a slow to moderate tempo. These are ending gestures, found at the close of a verse or a coda to the whole song (both are present in "My Way," only the verse ending in "Comme d'habitude").

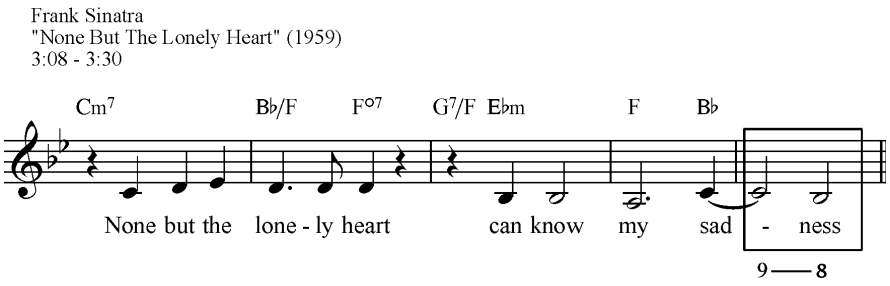
Ex. 11 – Suspension chains in "My Way" and "Comme d'habitude"



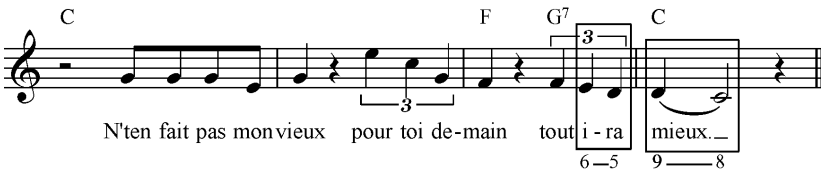
Since many of Sinatra's songs do not follow a verse-chorus paradigm, and this is especially true of the concept albums of the 1950s, I will consider examples that end any A section where no verse-chorus is present.

Ex. 12 – Comparison Material from Sinatra and François songs

a)

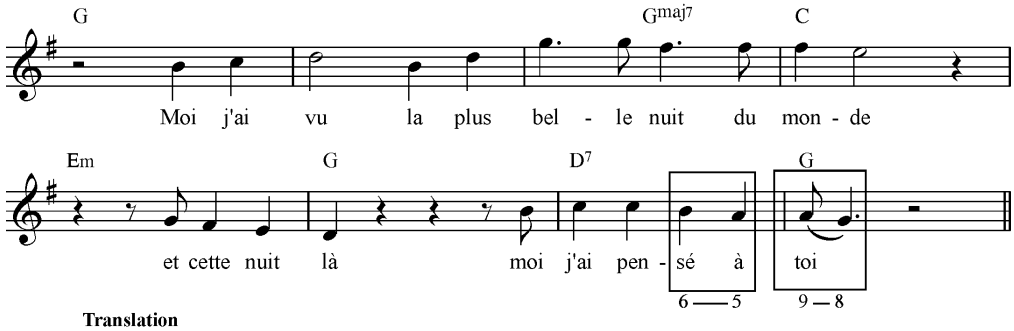


b) Claude François
"Ne t'en fait pas mon vieux" (1962)
0:32 - 0:39



Translation
Don't worry old friend
Tomorrow everything will go better.

c) Claude François
"La plus belle chose du monde" (1967)
0:34 - 0:50

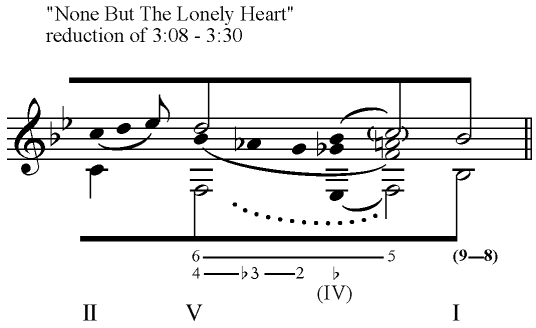


Translation
I saw the most beautiful night in the world
And that night, I thought of you

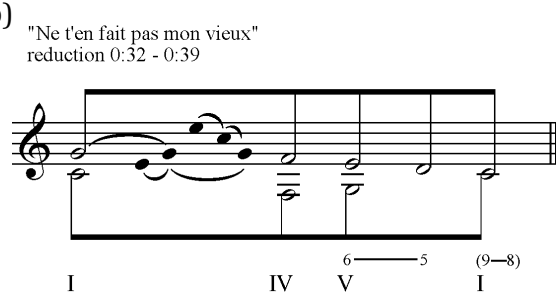
The excerpts of the three songs in Example 12 inhabit a world at the crossroads of pleasure and pain that is in the same spirit as the phrase endings of "My Way" and "Comme d'habitude." In Gordon Jenkins' arrangement of Tchaikovsky's "None But The Lonely Heart," Sinatra's last phrase takes a chromatic turn at the cadential 6/4, prolonging it by re-interpreting 3 as a member of Fdim and G7/F, before settling on the minor subdominant as a neighbor chord to V. During this expanded cadence, a chromatic fourth descent (B♭-A♭-G-G♭-F) plays out in an inner voice (see 13a) as Sinatra sings "None but the lonely heart can know…" When he finishes by rejoining the fundamental line and singing $\hat{2}$-$\hat{1}$ to the words "…knows my sadness," the harmony is B♭ major (I), giving the final gesture an air not of sorrow, but of consolation: only other lonely hearts understand and, since there are others, the singer is not really alone.

Ex. 13 – Reduction graphs for Example 10 songs

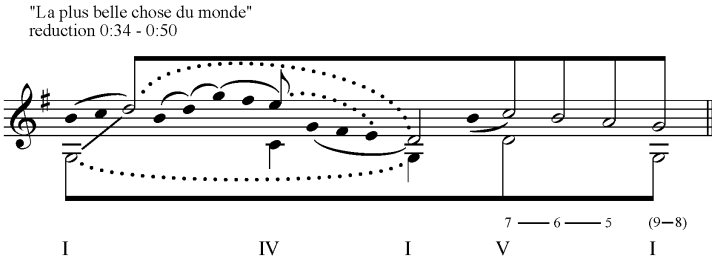
a)



b)



c)



In "Ne t'en fait pas mon vieux," the theme of consolation is foregrounded. The excerpt above (12b and 13b) features the lyrics "Ne t'en fais pas mon vieux, pour toi demain tout ira mieux" ("Don't worry, my friend, tomorrow everything will be better for you") to a similar appoggiatura chain. In this case, however, $\hat{3}$ is sung on an off-beat. Though it is $\hat{4}$, instead, that has the metric accent, I maintain that $\hat{3}$ still functions similarly to an appoggiatura. Since $\hat{4}$ is itself suspended into the dominant from the IV chord, $\hat{4}$ and $\hat{3}$ both sound dissonant moving to their expected resolution on $\hat{2}$. In this case the $\hat{4}$ is not acting as the 7th of the dominant, but simply as an upper neighbor to $\hat{3}$ that gets removed in the graph as the pitches are realigned with their structural correlates in the bass. As these dissonances are resolved, the singer is singing "all will be better." Interestingly, this is also a derivative whose source is the Jarmels' "A Little Bit Of Soap" (1961). In that song, when the jilted and heartbroken narrator sings this same last line of the verse, he sings "A little bit of soap will never wash away my tears." The certainty that the narrator will never

recover seems to bring him some comfort and, just like in "None But The Lonely Heart" there is a certain pleasure taken in this aesthetic pain.

The lyrics of "La plus belle chose du monde" ("The Most Beautiful Thing In The World") describe a person travelling to the ends of the Earth, but each time he sees some magnificent spectacle, he can only think of returning to his beloved. The appogiatura chain occurs on the words "and that night, I thought of you." Like "Ne t'en fais pas mon vieux," it represents a more complex syntactic situation than in "My Way" or "Comme d'habitude." Here, $\hat{4}$ arrives as a structural tone on beat 1, while $\hat{3}$ arrives on beat 3. The same $\hat{3}$ (B4), however, is present in the previous measure, making $\hat{4}$ sound like a neighbor note on the surface level, in addition to it being part of the $\hat{4}$-$\hat{3}$ (7-6) double dissonance as in "Ne t'en fais pas mon vieux." Although this song definitely points to feelings of longing, its verse endings connect more to a theme of eventual joyful reunion with the singer's loved one. Instead of reaching, the way the melodic line does at the beginning of the excerpt (13c), it settles down, admits the pain of separation, but resolves in the comfortable lower vocal register, knowing the separation will soon be over. Another derivative, "La plus belle chose du monde" has an English source in "Massachusetts" (1967) by the Bee Gees. This earlier song also connects with the same kind of consolation. In it, Robin Gibb sings about "the day I left her standing on her own" as he is heading back to Massachusetts to be with "her" again.

It is no coincidence that the use of appoggiatura chains found in "My Way" and "Comme d'habitude" recurs in songs whose lyrics speak of returning to a loved one, consoling a friend, or consoling oneself. It is also no coincidence that the appoggiatura chains occur in a low vocal register and at a slow to moderate tempo; consolation is not

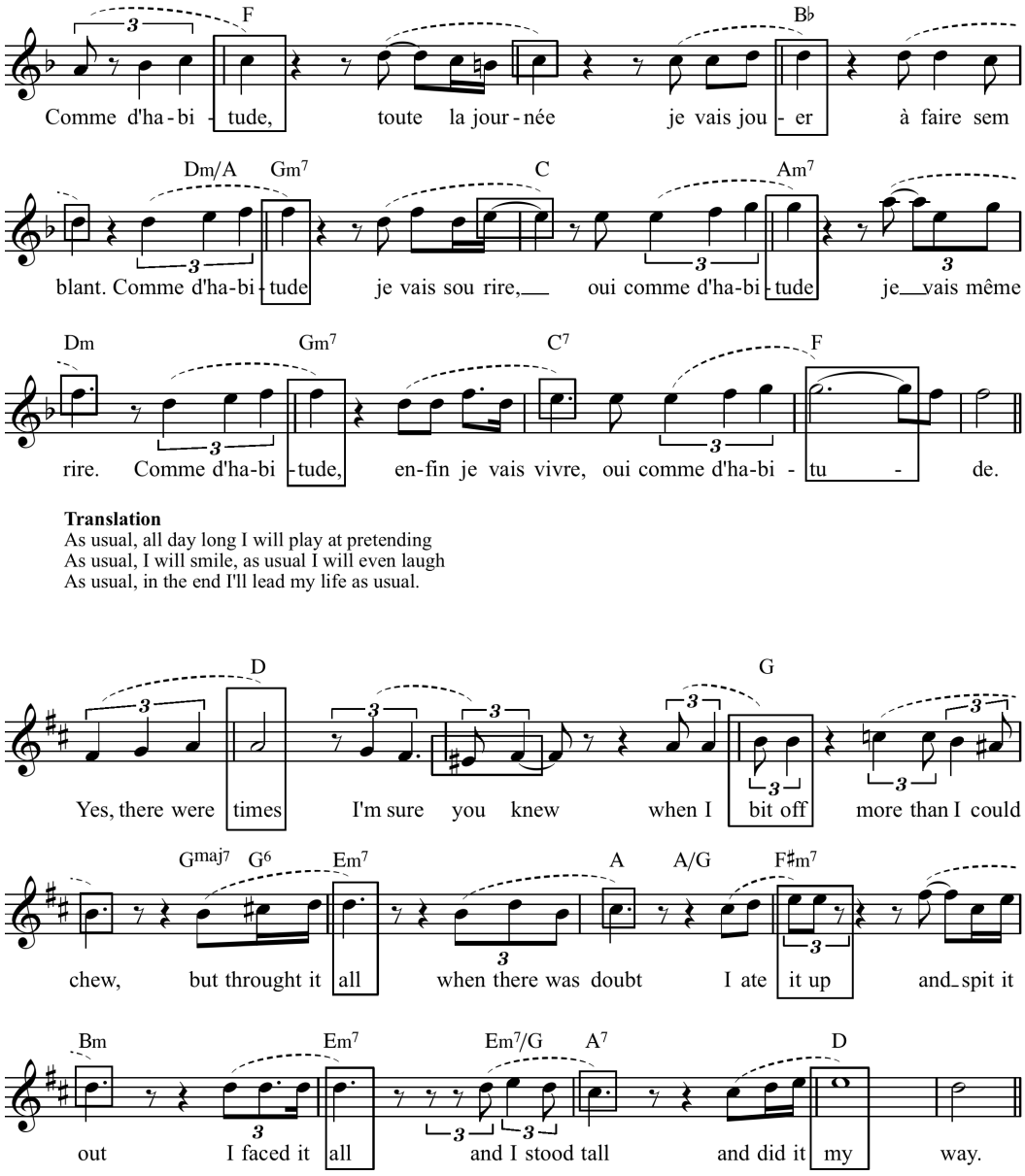
something that is trumpeted or yearning. Like the sentimental sixth, it is a soft-focused trope whose dissonant edges are smoothed, whose volume and register is subdued, and which sounds more self-reflexive than proclamatory. The difference in effect between "My Way" and "Comme d'habitude" lies in the trope's usage across the song. Whereas the derivative has the gesture conclude the coda of the song, in addition to all verse endings, the source has no such coda. Instead, "Comme d'habitude" finishes in a climactic loop of the chorus that never comes to rest. This difference is key to understanding the human universes of each song. In "My Way" there is resignation to an absolute (death), in "Comme d'habitude," however, there is no definitive ending, just the perpetual continuation of the inadequate present. Thus, to adapt the source, the derivative's ending must be changed, and so "My Way" closes completely and satisfactorily on a final cadence, in line with the lyrics.

Trope 4 – "Overcoming" Through Anacrusis Climaxes (figure)

The most marked aspect of the chorus is its use of anacruses that emphasize a long series of successive downbeats in a slowly ascending melody. These impetuses are a surface level rhythmic vehicle for a counterpoint involving the convergence of both the dramatic octave transfer of $\hat{3}$ and a rising line from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{2}$.[40] In Example 14, each hashed slur shows how a grouping of notes starting on or around beat 3 leads into the downbeat of the next measure.

[40] Anacrusis-climaxes are thus a form of "moment" climax in line with classical composition style, as opposed to a "sectional" climax more common in Rock music. See Brad Osborn, "Subverting the Verse-Chorus Paradigm: Terminally Climactic Forms in Recent Rock Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 35, no. 1 (2013): 26.

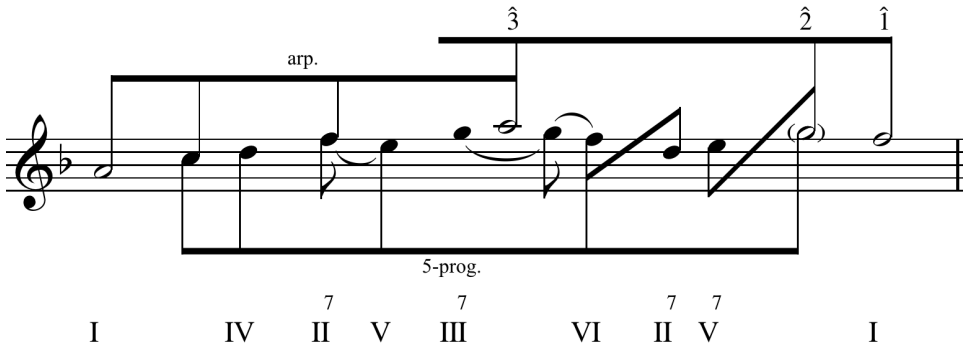
Ex. 14 – "Comme d'habitude"and "My Way" Chorus I



The large rectangles indicate the structural accents caused by the gradually rising melodic line, while the smaller boxes show rhythmic accents achieved either by vocal emphasis or orchestration (i.e. in Sinatra, the strings emphasize these downbeats). Example 15 streamlines the visual representation to clarify the counterpoint between the $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{2}$ rising

line, while $\hat{3}$ is transferred by arpeggio to the upper octave. Down-stemmed notes show the goals of each anacrusis (C, D, F, E, G, F, E, G).

Ex. 15 – Reduction of Chorus I (in F, but identical for both songs)



Chains of anacruses like the above are a recurring feature of a number of Sinatra and François songs. In searching my samples for similar passages as Example 14, the picture of a broadly-used and consistent technique arose. I am calling this technique the "anacrusis climax" since it refers to the rhythmic structure that is the core of the technique, but also to the formal end of it: the rhythmic marking of a climactic moment. Figure 8 summarizes the components required to label a passage as an anacrusis climax:

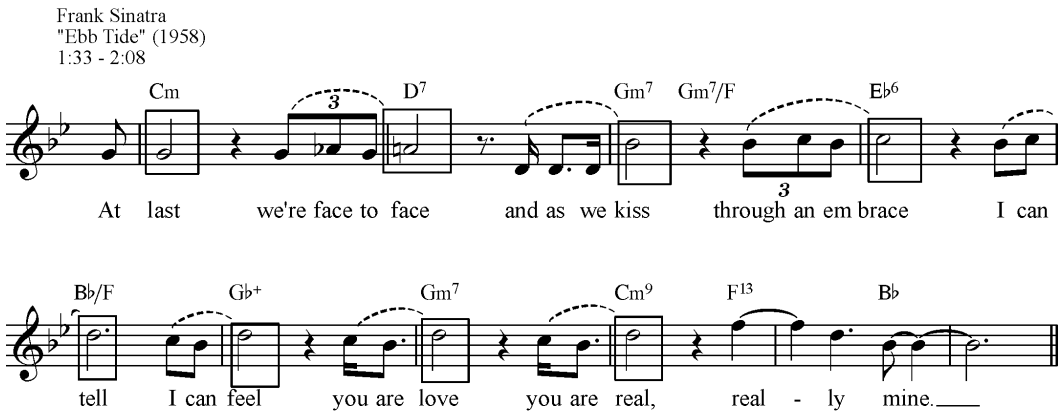
Fig. 8 – Anacrusis Climax Definition and Elements

1. A chain of anacruses marking downbeats on longer held pitches.
2. The anacrusis is the strongest, if not the only rhythmic gesture of the phrase.
3. Melodic material consists of ascending figures or sustained high points (these may be arpeggios, scales, etc.). Melodic line ends at the highest point, possibly with a short fall-off.
4. The gesture coincides with other climactic elements such as greater loudness, densest/most active orchestration, most dramatic lyrics, and hypermetric changes—especially truncation, breach of a registral ceiling.
5. It occurs only in non-verse sections (B sections, (pre-) choruses, and bridges).

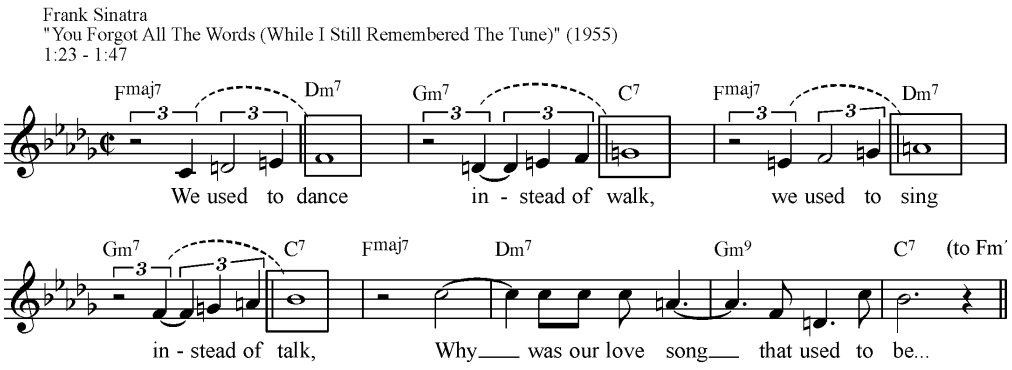
The above traits can be observed in the climaxes of a number of songs (Example 16). Both a) and b) progress by step to a registral ceiling (D and B♭, respectively) that is broken only at the very end of each passage, while c) stalls at the registral ceiling of D.

Ex. 16 – Anacrusis Climaxes in Frank Sinatra songs

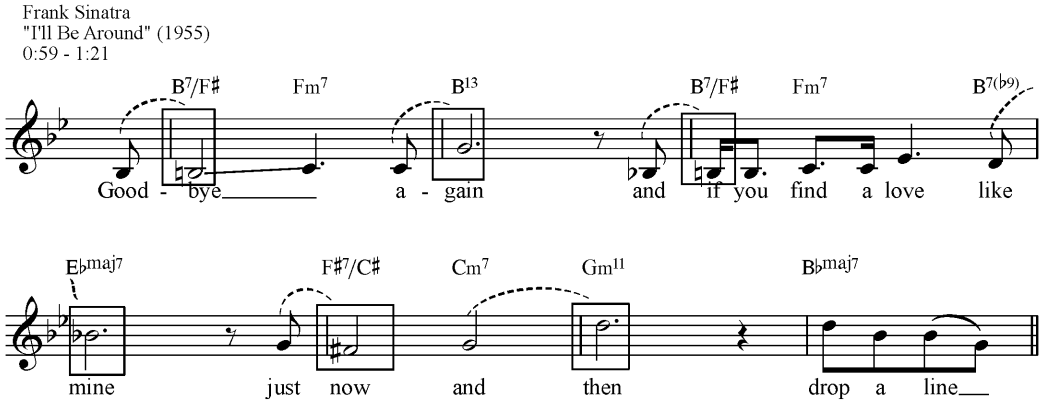
a)



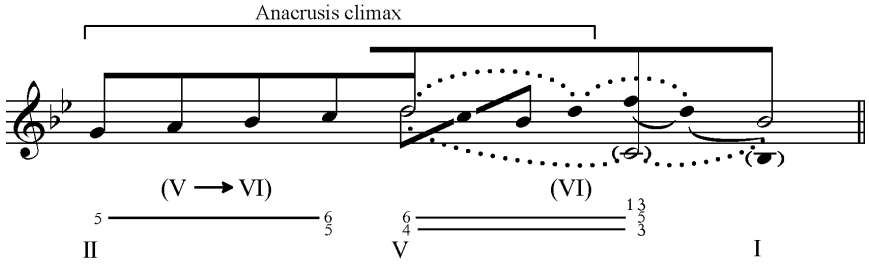
b)



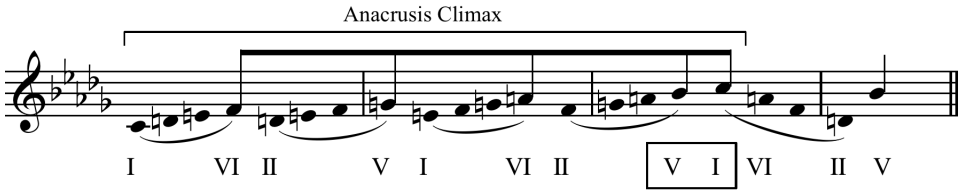
c)



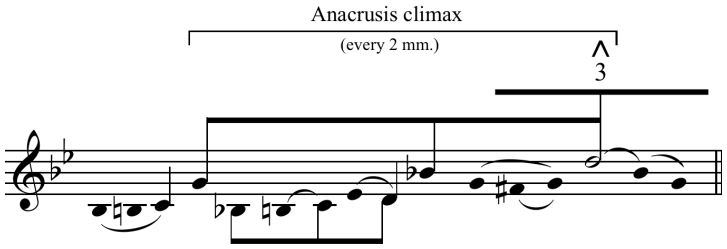
Reduction of a)



Reduction of b)



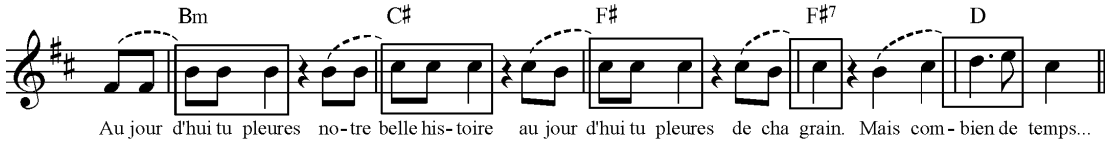
Reduction of c)



Ex. 17 – Anacrusis Climaxes in Claude François Songs

a)

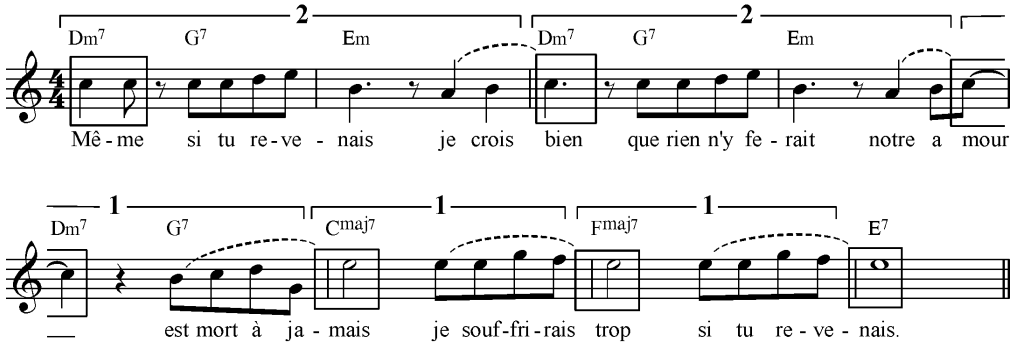
Claude François
"Mais combien de temps " (1966)
0:51 - 1:00



Translation
Today you cry for our beautiful story
Today you cry from grief
But how much time [will you cry for me?]

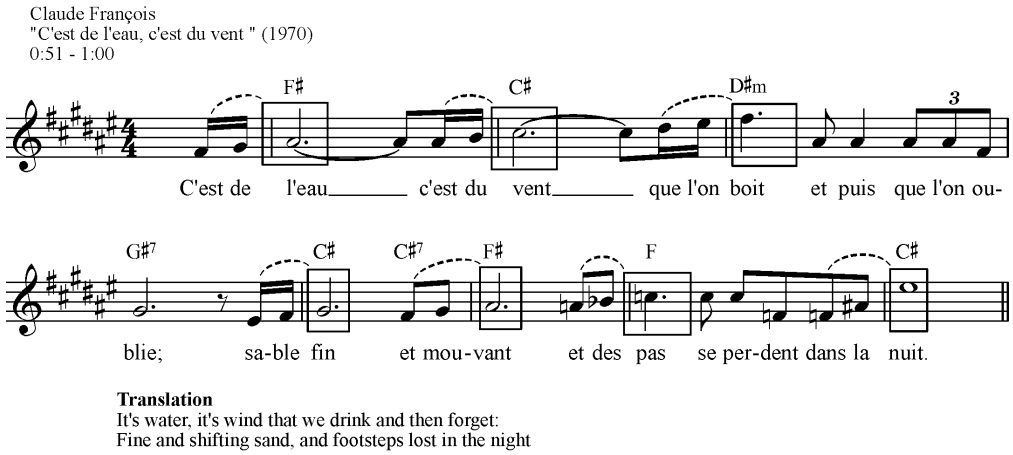
b)

Claude François
"Même si tu revenais" (1965)
0:41 - 0:58

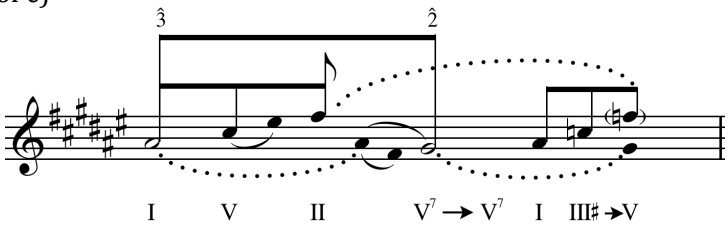


Translation
Even if you returned
I believe nothing would change
Our love is dead forever
I would suffer too much if you returned

c)



Reduction of c)



In the case of "Ebb Tide," the ascending line leads into the descent of the fundamental line, similar to "My Way" and "Comme d'habitude."

François, for his part, also sings songs that make use of this technique. Interestingly, all examples of this trope in his music arise exclusively from French pop.[41] The pre-chorus of "Mais combien de temps" ("But How Long?") maintains a registral ceiling of C that is breached only at the beginning of the chorus when the singer, after observing his former lover's grief, asks for how long she will really mourn the loss. "Même si tu revenais" ("Even If You Came Back") establishes a registral ceiling of E and combines it with a doubling of the hypermeter. The E is not transgressed in any permanent structural sense, however, underscoring the singer's assertion that even if the loved one returned, nothing could be done to heal the relationship. Lastly, similar to "Même sit tu revenais," "C'est de l'eau, c'est

[41] Claude François wrote "Mais combien de temps," while "Même si tu revenais" was written by Bernard Kesslair, and "C'est de l'eau, c'est du vent" by Alice Donna.

du vent" ("It's but water, it's but wind") builds two arpeggios, the first of which supports a cover neighbor tone to the second and thus acts as a registral ceiling that remains unchallenged.

Whether the ceilings are breached or not, these anacrusis climaxes all occur in conjunction with the protagonists' confrontations of major problems or questions central to the lyrics. In "I'll Be Around" and "Même si tu revenais," the singer faces irretrievable loss, manifest through a crescendo to the apogee of the line on "every now and then," only to deflate on "drop a line" on the one hand, and a paralysis on 5 with "I would suffer too much if you returned" on the other. In "Mais combien de temps" and "You Forgot All The Words," the singer's highest pitches are used to set the beginning of the questions: "But how long will you cry for me?" and "Why was our love song that used to be only the start of the blues for me?" In the first instance, the question ruptures the registral ceiling of C and comes across as an indignant outburst in the face of his ex-lover's expressions of sorrow that, as the lyrics make plain, the protagonist no longer believes is sincere. In the second, the singer's highest note is approached by way of a melodic sequence setting reminiscences in a different key from the song (F instead of Db). The passage is orchestrated and produced to sound like a big band in a 1930s dance hall. The high note, a C, dispels not only the sequence, but the orchestration, the 1930s hall sound, and initiates a phrase that cadences in F minor, paving the way back to Db and the dreary present. Not all examples are negative, however. "Ebb Tide"'s anacrusis climax finds the singer describing the moment he realized his lover was "real, really mine," while "C'est de l'eau, c'est du vent" also has to do with epiphany, this time with regard to the passage of time and how that which seems so important is "but water, it's but wind that we drink and then forget."

The anacrusis climaxes in "My Way" and "Comme d'habitude" inhabit a similar field of meaning. We find in both the confrontation of an existential crisis: "Yes there were times, I'm sure you knew, when I bit off more than I could chew," and "As usual, all day, I will play at pretending." Sinatra's version moves toward triumph. As his voice climbs in this register, it gains volume and power. There is struggle as he contends with the full orchestra and the higher than normal register. Ultimately, however, he stays on top and makes himself heard over the din. Although the elements of triumph identified in the Sinatra version are present in the François version as well—the orchestration is different but still much denser and more active than in the verses—the lyrics speak of a less affirmative experience. Lyrics like "As usual, in the end, I will lead my life as usual" set to such dramatic music provoke a kind of disconnect. As we have seen, anacrusis climaxes can be decidedly non-triumphant, but the issue of facing adversity is still relevant. In the face of a lover who is no longer in love with him, he will continue to stay in the relationship, live and love as usual.

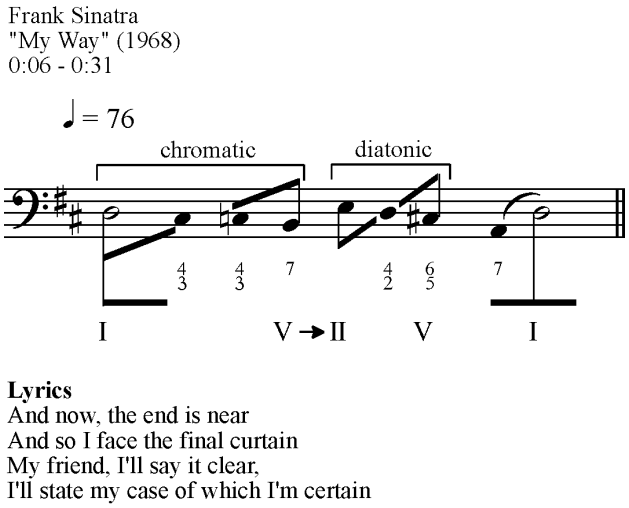
The constant and insistent movement to each downbeat of both songs, and of the comparisons, all represent struggle. How each ends—in jubilance, despondence, or vague indifference—depends largely on how closed the musical material seems to be at the end, on how the tonal functions are, or are not, complete. The endings' quality also depends greatly on how register is used, whether as an impermeable barrier, a barrier that is broken through, or as a transfer from one lower register to a higher one. It is highly likely that, with their fifth sequence in major, their loud, brassy, and active orchestrations, their high register voices, and their firm senses of tonal closure, these songs would lead an enculturated listener to hear some form of triumph even without lyrics. By juxtaposing this exultant music with themes of being taken for granted, being unloved, and yet still loving

too much to leave, François's lyrics create a strong sense of irony. In a source-derivative song relationship where a singular trope admits two such different interpretations (as in "My Way" and "Comme d'habitude"), the irony in the latter is essentially the crux of this chapter's argument. While words and music are not individually the sources of *meaning* in a song, when combined they change each other and together create emergent meanings that are available to an enculturated listener.

Trope 5 – Bass Line of "Diatonic Consolation" (ground)

Each other trope that I have examined from "My Way" in this chapter has thus far had a direct correlate in "Comme d'habitude," which is unsurprising given that "My Way" is its derivative. These tropes are, therefore, all instances where Anka was adapting new words to existing music. Given that new lyrics come with new and quite different narrative implications, no derivative is likely to reproduce the music of its source exactly.

Ex. 18 – Diatonic scalar descent in "My Way"



It seems improbable that a derivative's new set of lyrics will fit snugly into the source's music without the need of some kind of creative adaptation of the musical structures, however minute.As mentioned previously, Anka changed the music very little when he repurposed "Comme d'habitude," but what he *did* change has more than passing importance. Since every other decision Anka made about "My Way" falls in the category of "derivative," this exception does not contest the song's category. Instead, it is a case of the exception proving the rule: where the new words no longer worked as well with the music, Anka changed the music. This trope is, therefore, a trace of Anka's poiesis. It is a new strategy for a new song.

The trope is the descending diatonic bass line in the key of the supertonic that immediately follows the bass line of "chromatic loss."

Table 1 – Negative/Positive valence in "My Way" lyrics

Sung over chromatic bass	**Sung over diatonic bass**
Verse 1 And now the end is near And so I face the final curtain	**Verse 1** My friend, I'll say it clear I'll state my case of which I'm certain
Verse 2 Regrets, I've had a few But then again, too few to mention	**Verse 2** I did what I had to do I saw it through without exemption
Verse 3 I've loved, I've laughed and cried I've had my fill, my share of losing	**Verse 3** And now, as tears subside I find it all so amusing

Set to the words "My friend, I'll say it clear, I'll state my case of which I'm certain," this line stands in opposition to the connotations of regret and gloom in the preceding half-step

descent. The negative-positive contrast between these two lines recurs thematically in every verse of the song (Table 1).

"Comme d'habitude" does not have the affirmative turnaround of the diatonic bass and this is reflected in the lack of positive re-evaluation in the lyrics.

Ex. 19 – Absence of diatonic scalar descent in "Comme d'habitude"

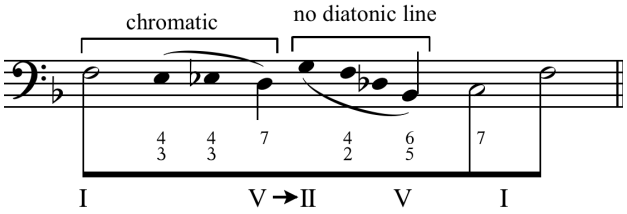


Table 2 – Negative/Ambivalent valence in "Comme d'habitdue" lyrics

Sung over chromatic bass	**Sung over II^7 arpeggio**
Verse 1 Je me lève et je te bouscule Tu n'te reveille pas, comme d'habitude (I get out of bed and I jostle you You don't wake up, as usual)	Sur toi, je remonte le draps J'ai peur que tu aies froid, comme d'habitude (I pull the sheets up on you I'm afraid you'll get cold, as usual)
Verse 2 Et puis je m'habille très vite Je sors de la chambre, comme d'habitude (And so I get dressed quickly I leave the room, as usual)	Tout seul je bois mon café Je suis en retard, comme d'habitude (Alone I drink my coffee I am late, as usual)
Verse 3 Et puis le jour s'en ira Moi, je reviendrai, comme d'habitude (And so the day will go by I will return, as usual)	Toi, tu seras sorti Pas encore rentré, comme d'habitude (You will be out Not home yet, as usual)

Though the first verse's second part may be seen as caring and loving (Table 2 "I pull the sheets up on you, I'm afraid you'll get cold, as usual"), it's doubtful that there is any sense of

consolation derived from ensuring the comfort of someone who no longer cares. The gesture instead demonstrates how the protagonist is stuck in the "usual" to his own detriment. In addition, whereas "My Way" defines certain very specific negative experiences to pair with the chromatic line, "Comme d'habitude" details relatively banal daily activities that spread endlessly over both the chromatic bass and the arpeggio of II^7 (where the diatonic bass is in Sinatra). "I get out of bed and I jostle you" or "And so I get dressed quickly," and all of their attendant iterations of "as usual," are defined negatively *by the music* first. Later, as the narrative develops, we come to understand the whole picture; that the routine the protagonist describes is one where he is ignored and unloved.

The difference between these songs is only in the bass line. Both leave the chromatic descent through a V-I in the key of II, followed by a repetition of earlier melodic material but up a step. This well-documented and common harmonic move in Euro-American popular music is not sufficiently marked to have any non-syntactical meaning.[42] But the diatonic descent in "My Way" arises through a $II\text{-}II^4{}_2\text{-}V^6{}_5$-I progression strongly reminiscent of the $I\text{-}II^4{}_2\text{-}V^6{}_5$-I that opens Bach's famous *Prelude in C major BWV 846* (1722). At first blush it may seem that Bach could not possibly have much to do with "My Way," and in reality, it is not so much Bach, but how Charles Gounod later set his music to the words of the "Ave Maria," that steers us toward the meaning of the trope.

In the chapter of *Ten Little Title Tunes* dealing with the film *While I Live* (1947, the tune is "The Dream of Olwen"), Tagg focuses on the above chord progression as an example of a family of chords that he has dubbed "Ave Maria Chords" after the Gounod piece of the

[42] Walter Everett illustrates a number of examples of V/II-II, including the raising of the melodic material by a step in the Stan Hawkins Singers' "Oh Happy Day." See Walter Everett, *The Foundations of Rock: From Blue Suede Shoes to Suite: Judy Blue Eyes* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009): 271.

same name that uses the Bach as accompaniment. The defining feature of this chord family is a pre-dominant held over a pedal 1 in the bass, usually moving to dominant harmony afterwards. Tagg cites examples from W. A. Mozart, Richard Wagner, M. W. Balfe, Max Steiner, Elton John, and a number of others.[43] Given the similarities of the comparison material, he concludes that such harmonies lead "associations in the direction of positive, tranquil, blissful consolation and serious emotions rather than towards matters frivolous, violent, horrific, comical abandoned or chaotic."[44] The progression moves away from the tonic, but not far and not in a terribly dissonant fashion. Whether the progression is underscored completely by a tonic pedal or imitates the Bach progression is immaterial. From a syntactical perspective, the result of mildly dissonant tonic prolongation is the same.

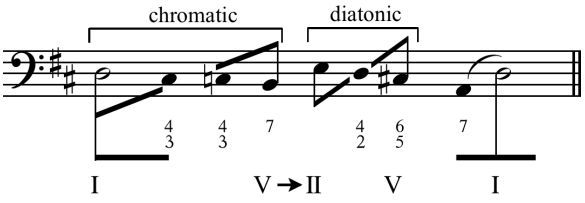
In the case of "My Way," the tonic prolongation is a little more complicated. The chromatic bass immediately removes the listener from the stable world of I in favour of II. In contrast to its analogue in "Comme d'habitude," the II is then subverted as a strong predominant by the reintroduction of 1 in the bass and the rest of the line moves by step, strongly emphasizing the V^6_5 harmony as the lower neighbour to I. The chromatic bass can then be seen as an interpolation, disrupting the harmless idyll of "Ave Maria" chords. Instead of *prolonging* a pedal 1, the bass line *regains* 1 through two unfolded thirds on 6 and 7. In this case, the V/II acts as a kind of bridge between the chromatic and diatonic tropes, like a line of symmetry that allows material to be repeated up a step. The parallelism essentially resets the clock on the bass 1, allowing us to hear the gesture as conceptually separate from the chromatic passage.

[43] Tagg and Clarida, *Ten Little Title Tunes,* 173-178.
[44] Ibid., 179.

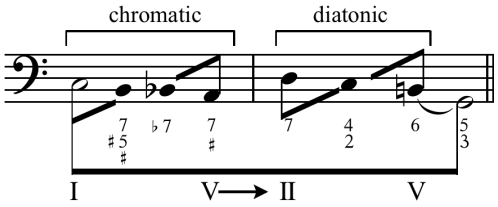
The fusion of these two tropes is an example of what Hatten has described as "troping," which he explains occurs "when two or more correlations are brought together to produce a third meaning."[45] Since the term conflicts with structural tropes in a way that is confusing, I will use "synthesis" instead. Thus the synthesis of these tropes gives rise to a new meaning. To gain a sense of what that might be, some comparison material is in order. Given the idiosyncrasy of such a marked gesture, however, it there are few examples in Sinatra's repertoire to compare with. Fortunately, as we saw earlier, "Gone With The Wind" (arr. Nelson Riddle) follows almost precisely the same pattern (Example 20).

Ex. 20 – Chromatic and diatonic synthesis in "My Way" and "Gone With The Wind"

"My Way"



"Gone With The Wind"



Both songs deal with loss that is somehow mixed with consolation. In "My Way," the protagonist may well be facing the final curtain, but what he is going to tell us is he clearly and unquestionably did everything his way. The protagonist of "Gone With The Wind" looks wistfully on a lifetime of bliss that he almost had. Implicit in the passages is the consolation of having had any bliss at all.

The synthesis of the tropes might be best described as bittersweet and as representing situations in which a protagonist has laughed and cried, having loved and lost. I do not think that the exact placement of the words over each component is necessarily

[45] Hatten draws his term from the medieval practice of interpolating old chants with new texts, music, or both. The meaning arising from such interpolation, he postulates, was part of the reason composers did this in the first place. See Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, 166 and Chapter VII footnote 4 on page 314.

crucial to understanding the synthesis, even though "My Way" makes a consistent practice of it. The line in "Gone With The Wind" that says "I had a lifetime of heaven/At my fingertips" perhaps more seamlessly fuses the elements: the whole statement is both painful and fond simultaneously. The only difference between the two examples is how they end: the latter with an unresolved half-cadence that underscores the unresolved emotions of the protagonist and the former with closure to I that is not quite an authentic cadence, but rather a re-establishment of the order so quickly dispelled at the opening. Strong closure is saved for the line in the lyrics that makes good on the protagonist's assertion that he is telling us what he knows with certainty.

That "Comme d'habitude" does not share this synthesis is significant. Its lyrics in no way combine elements of hope or consolation of the synthesis found in "My Way," and thus there is no music to underscore such ideas. Instead, the descending chromatic bass line leads to a tonicization of II, an arpeggio of II, and then directly to V. That much more conventional, and thus less marked, use of harmony does not contest the negativity of the chromatic bass; it simply provides a standard syntactical end. François's malaise remains as it has always been: everything is as usual. This situation reminds us that a derivative is not slavishly bound to its source and that the new context can make demands of the old. These demands are not tactics, because they do not rely on the original for their purpose. Instead, it is a negotiation born of poiesis that balances between the new elements (the lyrics) and the repurposed elements (the music). If anything, such negotiations demonstrate the powerful interrelated nature of the text-music combination in the creation of meaning in songs.

By examining the way five musical tropes interact with the lyrics of "Comme d'habitude" and "My Way," I have argued that, in four of the cases, the same trope could plausibly combine with each song's lyrics to create different human universes and portray different human experiences. It is important to remember at this juncture that the tropes I have parsed from the music of "My Way" and "Comme d'habitude," as well as their meanings, are not meant to be lexical or exhaustive; they are emergent. What I have tried to describe in this chapter is the music as *strategy*. This means that while enculturated listeners are likely to be able to recognize and decipher the tropes by virtue of their competence, they may not know or react to all of them, they may feel convinced about some more than others, and they may even recognize the tropes and the sincerity they are intended to convey while giving them opposite valences (i.e. "cheesy" or "kitcshy"). There are many possible interpretive stances a listener could take and these are as variable as the individuals who are listening. I argue, however, that whatever interpretations a listener may make will be *bounded* by the meanings emergent in the music and text of both songs. It is not that either song could mean *anything*, but that a range of interpretations are available that are neither truly infinite nor completely specific. Put another way, the combinations of music and lyrics together create consistent human universes which listeners accept, reject, and interpret through their own habitus.

It is these universes, however, that are the ultimate arbiters of whether or not a song is a cover. For there to be a original-cover relationship between songs, they must both issue from the *same* universe, that is to say, the cover must use the universe of the original as a starting point. The new song will change the universe, to be sure, but it will always be beholden to the original in the final analysis; it will always depend on the original for its

identity. This is not the case of source-derivative relationships. Though they share almost the same musical structures, they are nevertheless completely different songs as a result of the way in which the lyrics redefine the meanings emergent in the musical code.

In this light, it is clear that "My Way" is not a cover of "Comme d'habitude," but a derivative. The musical-verbal meanings evoked by both songs serve completely different expressive ends and speak of vastly different experiences. Most importantly, the meanings of "My Way" do not rely on "Comme d'habitude" for their identity. This is why I think that François was mistaken in the quotation at the outset of this chapter. There is no resistance or tribute to him in "My Way." Sinatra performs the song without backward reference, without memory of "Comme d'habitude," memorialization being an important part of what any cover accomplishes. Instead, "My Way" repurposes the musical structures of "Comme d'habitude" by overlaying new lyrics that erase the torment of the jilted François in favour of the triumph and confidence of Sinatra. Like compounds in a chemical reaction, when the music is combined with the different sets of lyrics, the meanings of the song emerge transformed, and this transformation fundamentally alters the identity of the songs. Though distantly related, they are different cultural categories. As we shall see in the next chapters, Sid Vicious's, Elvis Presley's, and Johnny Vegas's versions of "My Way" rely heavily on Sinatra's. What differentiates them is that, no matter how much they may try to be isomorphic or metamorphic, they are still covering "My Way."

CHAPTER 3

Metamorphic Covers:
Notions of inclusion and exclusion in Sid Vicious's "My Way"

> "Sid Vicious's version isn't my favourite, and I can't say honestly that I would listen to it every week, but what he did worked as both a goof *and* a sincere take on it, which is a pretty amazing accomplishment in and of itself. Sid put himself into the song, and he really did do it his way." –Paul Anka[1]

The Punk Movement, Inclusion, Exclusion, and Détournement

John Simon Ritchie's trajectory from disaffected poor London youth to cultural icon was done by negotiating, on various levels (legal, socio-economic, artistic, etc.), a theme central to the punk movement: namely, the tension between inclusion and exclusion. Growing up with a single mother in economically troubled and very class-conscious postwar England, Ritchie first plunged into the chaotic world of punk as the Sex Pistols' number one fan, a regular at the 100 Club, a familiar face at Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood's shop, SEX, and as a saxophone player for The Flowers of Romance, a basement band that hacked away at songs by the Ramones and—interestingly—Frank Sinatra, but that never performed.[2] He emerged later as Sid Vicious, variously described as a "lost little boy utterly beyond help," a "T-shirt selling icon," and "the beginner of the age of

[1] Paul Anka and David Dalton, *My Way: An Autobiography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013), 212.
[2] Alan Parker, *Sid Vicious: No One Is Innocent* (London: Orion, 2007), 56–57. Parker does not cite a source for the fact that Vicious and the Flowers played Sinatra songs but nevertheless underscores to his readers that he is certain of this fact.

participation in which everyone could be the artist."[3] When he replaced bassist Glen Matlock and became a part of the Sex Pistols in February 1977, he had never played the instrument. John Lydon later said on BBC Radio 1 that "the fact [Vicious] couldn't play was absolutely irrelevant. It was part of the fun of it all."[4] He wanted to be a part of the Sex Pistols so much that his mother, Anne Beverley, recounted how he would have joined "if they had kept Glen and decided they needed a violinist."[5] He had no objections to being selected for his buffoonery rather for than his musical talent. When he got on stage at Paris's Théâtre Olympia in April 1978 for the filming of the "My Way" segment in Julien Temple's iconic punk film, *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle* (1980), however, he was no longer the buffoon. He did the shoot in two unbroken and almost identical takes. Filming lasted less than an hour. According to soundtrack coordinator John Tiberi, Vicious worked out the whole shoot himself and demonstrated a "great intuition about the cameras."[6] Sid Vicious, who was once excluded from the punk music scene, now stood on the verge of realizing the ambitions of his lover and manager, Nancy Spungeon: he was going to the epitome of inclusion, he was going to be a star.[7]

Issues of inclusion and exclusion are central not just to the punk movement but also to the practice of covering songs. Whether a cover will be warmly received, reviled, or both, and by whom and under which circumstances are central questions at play for cover artists, producers, and record labels. Metamorphic covering, through which an artist creates a new

[3] Respectively by McLaren in Ibid., 3; by Phil Strongman in Phil Strongman, *Pretty Vacant: A History of Punk*, (London: Orion, 2007), 235; and by John Lydon in John Lydon, Keith. Zimmerman, and Kent Zimmerman, *Rotten: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs: The Authorized Autobiography, Johnny Rotten of the Sex Pistols* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 255.
[4] Parker, *No One Is Innocent*, 71.
[5] Ibid., 71.
[6] The story is corroborated in three sources: Parker, *No One Is Innocent*, 159; Strongman, *Pretty Vacant,* 236; Tiberi quotation is from Savage, *England's Dreaming*, 493.
[7] Parker, *No One Is Innocent*, 164.

version that actively tries to be different from the original, walks this line most of all. The further away a cover version strays from a well-known original, the higher the odds of running afoul of the musical communities that value that original. The other side of the issue, however, is that the metamorphic interpretation could make or further cement the bond between the cover artist and the communities who are sympathetic to that artist's vision.

As with any binary opposition, however, the concepts of inclusion and exclusion require careful framing because, on some level of close scrutiny, the binary can be deconstructed. Sarah Thornton's (1996) work on club cultures in England has demonstrated this point.[8] She critiques subcultural theorists such as Dick Hebdige, Simon Frith, Angela McRobbie, and Stuart Hall for their use of what she perceives as totalizing oppositions when each defines the subculture-versus-mainstream binary. These scholars, Thornton explains, fail to agree on definitions of "mainstream" and "subculture," resulting in the authors contradicting each other and sometimes even themselves. Thus, in their analyses, the *same* mainstream or subcultural products can be viewed negatively (as bourgeois dominance or educated elitism), positively (as blue-collar mass culture or vanguard deviancy), or *both* depending on the scholar and the argument they are trying to make. To confound the definitions further, these scholars also ascribe a hard division between the two halves of the binary, erasing the reality that the boundary between mainstream and subculture is fluid. In the case of Sid Vicious, as the quotations that open this chapter imply, there is undoubtedly some *mixture* of belonging and ostracism that informs his persona. To avoid the above pitfalls of the subculture/mainstream opposition

[8] Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1996), 96–97.

in discussing Vicious's cover, it is better to consider his inclusion and exclusion from cultural communities with more fluid, and thus less binary, boundaries. Communities of musical taste, for instance, are often clearer dividers of people than the more dubiously clear-cut concepts of mainstream and subculture. Sociologist George Lewis described the underlying sociality of musical taste when he argued that it is formed through imitation of people we like and respect. Bourdieu asserted that musical taste is the most powerful—after food—of all aesthetic appreciations, eliciting extreme emotional reactions of love and hatred. From this, Thornton concludes that as "a deep-seated taste dependent on background, music preference is therefore a reasonably reliable indicator of social affinity."[9] It is in this dimension, as regards both the persona of Sid Vicious and his metamorphic cover of "My Way," that I want to read issues of inclusion and exclusion from the musical worlds and communities of taste that surround punk rock and the music of Frank Sinatra.[10] Not originally a member of the Sex Pistols, Sid Vicious eventually gained insider status in punk performance when he became a member of the band. In covering a song like "My Way" that was inarguably excluded from the subculture by a vast majority of punks on the grounds of musical taste, Vicious transgressed aesthetic boundaries and, thus, the boundaries of the listening communities of both punk and Sinatra. He created a cover that strays decidedly away from the original.

Unsurprisingly, the tension of inclusion and exclusion manifest in Vicious's life is also manifest as the central tension in his cover of "My Way." As Anka astutely points out, Vicious is being both sincere and insincere in the performance: he reviles the song one

[9] Lewis and Bourdieu are cited in ibid., 112–113.
[10] By using "music world" I am adapting and narrowing the focus of Howard Becker's notion of "art worlds," which he defines as "an established network of cooperative links among participants [of a given artform]." Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 34–35.

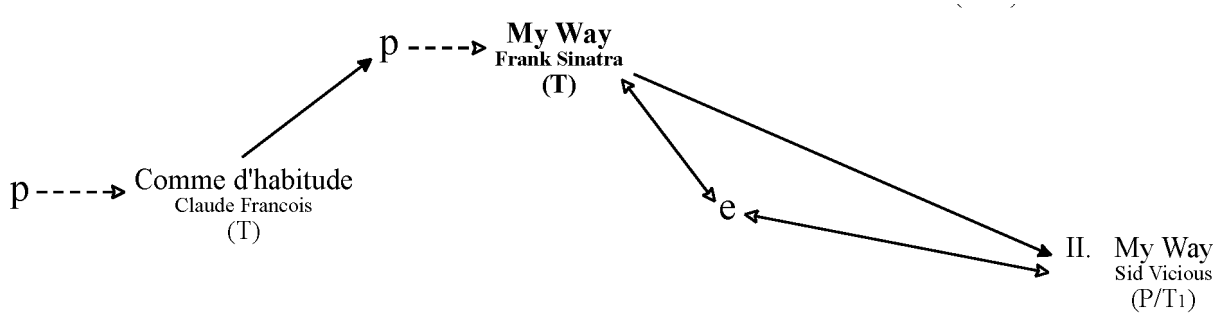
moment while he gets "swept up in it" the next.[11] Vicious was initially against performing the song, and it took McLaren's insistence and cajoling for him to agree. Even then, he procrastinated and did little but practice Ramones riffs on bass when he showed up sober (or when he showed up at all).[12] Nevertheless, on 10 April 1978, Claude Engel (guitar), Sauveur Mallia (bass), and André Dehan (drums) laid down the instrumental tracks and fought with Vicious over interpretive issues before he finally laid down the vocals. Engineer Manu Guyot sent the mix to Virgin Records headquarters in London, where Sex Pistols guitarist Steve Jones added further guitar tracks, and the Penguin Café Orchestra under Simon Jeffes added the string parts.[13] The result was a punk cover song whose original was contrary to punk's aesthetics of raw emotion and "authentic" performance. Sinatra's "My Way" indulges in mainstream notions of beauty, virtuosity, sophistication, and—despite its title—crowd-pleasing intentions. By singing it, Vicious walked the blurry and subculturally dangerous line between rebellion and inclusion, expulsion and acceptance, fringe and mainstream. As in his struggle with heroin addiction and his urge to become a star despite his abilities, Vicious's cover of "My Way" reveals in its interplay of verbal, visual, and musical signifiers a set of internal conflicts between his simultaneous aspirations of being the excluded and deviant punk rocker, and the included, crowd-pleasing, and idolized star.

In analyzing Vicious's cover of "My Way," my purpose is to explore an *in extremis* example of a metamorphic cover. As such, the focus is on poiesis, or the means by which performance decisions change the musical text and the meanings we can read into it. As Figure 9 illustrates, Vicious's version forms its own family of "My Way" covers (labelled "II"

[11] Anka and Dalton, *My Way*, 211.
[12] Parker, *No One Is Innocent*, 158; Lydon, Zimmerman, and Zimmerman, *Rotten*, 255.
[13] Parker, *No One Is Innocent*, 158.

because Presley's cover, "I," predates it by 5 years). Poiesis and trace (P/T) are conflated, as we saw in Chapter 1, because all of the changes made to Sinatra's base song are observable in the film. The esthesic dimension (e) links the songs in the sense that it is both the cover artist's reception of the base song and the listeners' reception of both. It is lower case because it is not directly observable in the video, though the video allows some inferences about Vicious's reception of Sinatra to be made.

Fig. 9 – Diagram of the influences on Sid Vicious's "My Way"



In the previous chapter, I examined how the same musical text can engender separate songs, a source from which the text originates, and "derivatives," which repurpose the musical text for use with new lyrics. Both become *strategies* that hold sway over separate worlds of possible covers. In this chapter, I will examine how "My Way" from *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle* illustrates the use of *tactics*, how the interpretation resists and conforms to the original, and how it uses it to create something that is, while not wholly new, nevertheless fresh and unquestionably different.

Such a process has been described in reference to punk by Dick Hebdige (1979), who observed that punk worked by *bricolage*—which artist Max Ernst (1948) has described as the juxtaposition of "apparently incompatible realities… on an apparently

unsuitable scale…"[14] It also has important connections to the Lettrist International's concepts of *dérive* and *détournement*, which describe first the search for aesthetic artifacts, and then their appropriation into new contexts by the artists to create new meanings.[15] The punk scholar Greil Marcus (1989) defines détournment as: "A politics of subversive quotation, of cutting the vocal chords of every empowered speaker, social symbols yanked through the looking glass, misappropriated words and pictures diverted into familiar scripts and blowing them up."[16] Détournment is clearly crucial to Vicious's interpretation as his performance layers new meanings on top of old ones, fundamentally altering the experience of hearing the song. My analysis will therefore focus on how the piecemeal changes that were made to "My Way" work together to *détourne* from the original and, thus, to express the overall tension between inclusion and exclusion central to the persona of Sid Vicious.

Case Study 2: Sid Vicious's "My Way," April 1978

In covering "My Way," Vicious détournes strategies of Sinatra's original by using two tactical modes that initially may seem at odds with each other. On the one hand, he *injects* artifice into the song by changing the lyrics at certain moments, by using body language to a much greater degree than Sinatra, and by using a vocal performance style quite different from its crooner beginnings. On the other hand, Vicious's version *strips away* artifice: vocal

[14] Dick. Hebdige, *Subculture, The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979), 154, 156.
[15] Lettrist International (LI) was the name of the intellectual, avant-garde continental group when these concepts were first articulated. They were later renamed Situationist International (SI). Though they have no direct ties to the Sex Pistols or the punk movement, Grail Marcus has argued that the SI ethos was brought to life through punk, particularly, "Anarchy In The U. K." See Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 18–24, 168.
[16] Ibid., 179.

rhythms are squared and regularized, bass lines (and thus the harmonies) are simplified, and the vocal register is rendered less expansive. The reason for this two-pronged assault is fairly understandable. Sinatra's performances tend to rely heavily on vocal delivery and musicianship, and, as a result, his physical performance is often rather muted, usually limited to a few gestures with the free hand while the hand holding the microphone stays very still.[17] In covering the song, Vicious has two points of entry to détourne it: by including his own physical and vocal performance and by excluding parts of the music not deemed essential to the song or to his message. In this manner, he reverses the original's emphasis on music and musicianship in favour of the body and vocal performance.[18]

In this respect, the visual dimension of the performance is indispensable. Although "My Way" was released as a single in June 1978 and charted at number 7 in the United Kingdom, using only the recording would impoverish my analytical efforts. As Dave Laing has argued, in punk—unlike pop—the performance is of greater importance than the recording, one of the principal dispositions punk shares with other avant-garde movements.[19] While the excerpt of *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle* in which Vicious performs "My Way" is the simulacrum of a live show, it does give a window into Vicious's embodied performance. Moreover, performance-as-simulacrum adds a further layer of

[17] These hand gestures are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Sinatra's performance style is clearly demonstrated in his 1971 performance in London "Frank Sinatra – My Way (Frank Sinatra Live in London 1971)" at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2RDHvRF-mA (accessed 8 October 2014) and his October 1974 performance at Madison Square Garden, "My way (Subtitulada) Madison Square Garden, New York 1974," http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQRSIUNeZTI (accessed 8 August 2014).

[18] The sequence was filmed during the lunch break of a French variety show that was also filming at the Olympia. It is also worth noting that in that hour, only two takes were made, both complete. It can be argued that—along with the lack of time, and the severally reported mesmerized reaction of Serge Gainsbourg, who was in attendance as a guest on the variety show—Vicious was performing every bit as much as if it were a public concert. See Savage, *England's Dreaming*, 493; Strongman, *Pretty Vacant*, 236; Parker, *No One Is Innocent*, 159.

[19] Dave Laing, *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1985), 53.

interpretation: if punk is about the live show, then the fake show exists in a world between punk and the mainstream preference for recordings; including elements of each, yet excluded from both.

Another aspect of this performance is how it resonates with what Simon Frith has described as the performance artist's *subjectification*.

> …performance art described stage performers (actors, dancers) who now took themselves and their bodies as the objects or sites of narrative and feeling. Such performers no longer "acted out" (or "in") a playscript or choreographic score, but effectively *subjectified* themselves: the implication of their work (which depended… on a degree of collusion from the audience) was that what was happening on stage was determined only by the nature, shape, technique, body, and will of the performers themselves, which meant, among other things, a new emphasis on the process of putting together and taking apart a *persona*.[20]

In contrast to the objectification of the artist as the medium of the art, the artist is instead the site of the narrative, the construction and deconstruction of a persona (for example, Sid Vicious singing ironically about doing it "my way").[21] The straightforward sincerity of Sinatra's version gives way to the many facets of Vicious's persona embodied in the various shades of sincerity and insincerity in various levels of the performance (body language, voice, lyrics, music, etc.). Even though it echoes Frith's comments, and even though punk echoes performance art through its avant-garde orientation, Vicious's cover is not so clear-cut. Performance art, as Frith noted, is entirely determined by the performer, but that is clearly not the case in a cover song, however metamorphic it aspires to be. Vicious's version, just as with everything else, incorporates *both*, invoking a high measure of performer determinacy without rendering the song unrecognizable or creating a derivative.

[20] Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 205.
[21] Ibid., 204–205;

Performance Context

Over rapidly cut establishing shots of the outside of the Olympia, a male voice announces in French: "I have the great honour of presenting to you, and for the first time in France…" The film cuts to the stage, where the announcer exclaims with a sweeping arm gesture toward the curtain, "Sid Vicious!"[22] The house lights go black, the stage lights come on, then the camera cuts to the excited, seated audience, in which a middle-aged woman figures in the center of the shot. There is a close-up of her face before the camera cuts to the stage, the curtains partway drawn around a large staircase descending from nowhere in particular. Sid Vicious, dressed in what Julien Temple described as "destroyed dinner dress" (tuxedo shirt, pants, with a garter on one leg) swaggers down the stairs and up to the microphone to a Xenakis-like string glissando that ends on an E major chord.[23] The middle-aged woman turns to the old lady in furs seated next to her and exclaims "I can't believe it's my Sid up there!" Though it is never specifically mentioned, this was meant to be Anne Beverley, Vicious's mother. Beverley was asked to be in this film but when told of her eventual "demise" she told Malcolm McLaren that "he could go fuck himself," so an actress was used in her stead.[24]

In the 25 seconds of this introduction, the whole "My Way" sequence sets up the context in which Vicious's punk performance will unfold as a socially acceptable place, where a person could expect to hear music that is "high art."[25] First of all, the setting is an

[22] "J'ai le grand honneur de vous presenter, et pour la première fois en France…"
[23] Savage, *England's Dreaming*, 494.
[24] Parker, *No One Is Innocent*, 160; Savage, *England's Dreaming*, 494; Strongman, *Pretty Vacant*, 236.
[25] For ease of reference, timings will be given based on the official Youtube video found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bu_R3pduiEY, accessed 8 October 2014.

established theatre in Paris, complete with marquee.[26] Second, Vicious is *introduced* in this theatre, one with production values presumably much higher than most punk venues at the time (a stage, a set, lighting, stage crew to run the show, etc.). The similarity to Las Vegas is quite palpable, cheapening the punk "authenticity" about to be on display.[27] Third, the crowd is seated—likely a rarity for a punk show—and composed of mostly older, obviously more affluent people (signified by their tuxedos, coats, and jewelry). Though they certainly fit in with the setting, they are nevertheless incongruous with the purpose. Moreover, they are the only non-punks seen in the entirety of *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*, further marking them in the context of the film. Lastly, the staircase entrance plays on a storied show business trope that signifies grand, bold entrances.[28] Although the presence of the staircase was, in fact, unanticipated (the sequence was filmed during a lunch break by a French variety show that was also filming at the Olympia, so Temple decided to just use the existing set), the production made use of it quite in line with the trope.[29]

All of the elements listed above but one are cognitively consonant with each other for an enculturated spectator. They represent what might be expected by a night out at the theatre, they proclaim "show business," and they proclaim "mainstream culture." The only element out of place here is Sid Vicious himself. Strutting down the stairs in his discombobulated attire, he is the antithesis of the place he is in and the people who comprise his audience. Hebdige, drawing on Barthes (1972), calls this kind of juxtaposition

[26] This connects back to François, interestingly, since it brings "My Way" back to France and particularly back to the Olympia, a theatre in which François performed and recorded.
[27] MacLaren has claimed that he tried to get Vicious a regular engagement in Vegas during the latter's trial for the murder of Nancy Spungeon, see Parker, *No One Is Innocent*, 3.
[28] *Hello Dolly*, various *Follies* (Sondheim, Will Rogers), and particularly *Sunset Boulevard* (both the original and the musical) use staircases for unabashedly grand entrances. This was parodied in *Funny Girl*, confirming the recognizability of this trope.
[29] As mentioned in a previous note, the set was for a Serge Gainsbourg piece and that he watched the filming of "My Way" with great interest. See Parker, *No One Is Innocent*, 159; Strongman, *Pretty Vacant*, 236.

communicating a *difference*, the recontextualization and subversion of convention, or the creation of new conventions. If it is significant enough, the difference becomes "the superordinate term under which all significations are marshalled, through which all other messages speak."[30] When Vicious takes center stage at the microphone over the crystallization of that E major chord, so do the notions of inclusion and exclusion that this performance context have put into play. He has already begun to détourne the song. These tactics reinforce the effect of the parametric changes in body language and musical genre, described in the following sections, to pull the song away from the Sinatra version on yet another level.

Performance Act

One of the main sites of détournement in Vicious's version is the local modification of Paul Anka's original lyrics. According to Julien Temple, Vicious was difficult to work with during the recording sessions since his heroin habit had put him in the worst state Temple had witnessed.[31] They apparently "fought over every line. But eventually 'I'll say it clear' was altered to 'I'm not a queer' and 'I chewed it up' became 'I shot it up.'"[32] There was, therefore, a concerted and thought-out effort put into the word changes. Table 3 below illustrates all changes, fifteen in total, divided up into "major" changes—in which significant words or entire passages are replaced with new material or omitted completely, resulting in change of semantic meaning—and "minor" changes—in which expressions are

[30] Hebdige, *Subculture, The Meaning of Style*, 102, citing Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (London: Paladin, 1972).
[31] "He was worse than I'd seen him before. It was very depressing, the decline of Sid—he was a shell physically of himself at the end, as a result of smack," quoted in Parker, *No One Is Innocent*, 158.
[32] *David McGillivray, "*Twenty Five Years On: Julien Temple and *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*," *No Focus: Punk on Film*, Chris Barber and Jack. Sargeant eds. (London: Headpress, 2006), 24.

simplified or slightly changed without their overall meaning being affected. Of the twelve major changes, the vast majority détourne the triumphalism expressed in the Sinatra version.

Table 3 – Lyric changes in Sid Vicious's "My Way" (Minor changes in italics)

Vicious Lyric	**Anka Lyric**	**New Meaning Category**	**Major/ Minor**
Ha, ha! You cunt, I'm not a queer	My friend, I'll say it clear	Homosexuality	Major
along the highway	*upon the byway*		*Minor*
There were times	*Yes, there were times*		*Minor*
when there was fuck-, bugger-all else to do	when I bit off more than I could chew	Homosexuality	Major
I shot it up, I kicked it out	I ate it up and spit it out	Violence	Major
I faced the wall -----(omitted)------	I faced it all, and I stood tall	Violence	Major
I've been a snide	I've laughed and cried		Major
To think I killed a cat	To think I did all that	Violence	Major
And might I say, not in a gay way	And might I say, not in a shy way	Homosexuality	Major
For what is a brat?	For what is a man?	Inside Reference	Major
When he wears hats, then he cannot	If not himself, then he has naught	Inside Reference / Powerlessness	Major
say the things	*to say the things*		*Minor*
but only the words (of one who kneels)	and not the words	Powerlessness/ Homosexuality	Major
I fucked a bloke	I took the blows	Homosexuality	Major
----------(omitted)----------	Yes it was my way		Major

Seven of the changes are related to issues of homosexuality and explicit violence, and two deal with the powerlessness of personal expression. In this context, references to

homosexuality are not made in a positive light; it is something to be denied ("I'm not a queer," "not in a gay way"), or something sexually violent ("I fucked a bloke, and did it my way").[33] Either way, when homosexuality is invoked in the song, it is threatening and disturbing.The violent images of killing cats, of hard drug abuse (a kind of self-directed violence), and execution (facing a wall) also cast the song lyrics into bleak and nihilistic territory invoking psychopathy, substance abuse, and death.[34] Arguably, the dark turn of the lyrics is mixed with a certain playfulness, one that delights in tearing down the banal monumentality of lines like "I took the blows" by making it about what was, in 1979 England, still popularly seen as a transgressive form of sex, "blokes fucking blokes."

While keeping the overall frame of the song intact, the changes to the lyrics are potent enough to be considered metamorphic. They create a mainstay of punk expression, what Dave Laing has called a "local traumatic shock effect," or the provocation of surprise by changing an element within a single parameter of the song.[35] The degree of surprise and whether it turns to laughter, revulsion, or possibly both, clearly depend on the listener and their familiarity with the original, but they also have to do with the musical and performative context in which the words are found. Given the performance context of respectable, older people in a mainstream venue, having Sid Vicious singing these words in a cover of a mainstream hit certainly makes them seem engineered for maximum metamorphic impact. Increasing this impact and the sense of the surreal already present is the roar of applause he receives for each transgression.

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[33] It is possible to read a double meaning in the word "queer" as being homosexual or unusual/weird. Regardless of which specific version Vicious meant, the word refers to outsiders and is thus quite apt.
[34] Domestic animal cruelty is considered to be an early indicator of antisocial personality disorder. See Roman Gleyzer, MD, Allen R. Felthous, MD, and Charles E. Holzer III, PhD, "Animal Cruelty and Psychiatric Disorders," *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2002): 257-265
[35] Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, 78.

Layered on top of these local word changes is Vicious's body language. Other than the staircase, the microphone, and the curtains, there is nothing on stage. All of the Olympia's (and, when the shot is of the stage, the film viewer's) attention is focused on Vicious. He capitalizes on this by using physical gestures as tactics to détourne the meanings of the original for his own expressive purposes. Just as with other punk performances, Vicious's is an attempt to erase the boundary between star and audience, but what's particularly interesting here is that the boundary he is erasing is not between him and the audience *in* the film, but between him and the audience *watching* it.

Fig. 10 – "Crooner" section physical gestures

Eye-rolling (0:31)

"Gay" limp wrist (0:36)

"Knowing" eyebrows (1:01)

With only a few spectacular exceptions, Vicious's physical gestures are not used to reinforce the lyric changes discussed above. Instead, Vicious "fills in the gaps," as it were, redefining the meanings of *unchanged* lyrics by using his own physicality.

This is particularly relevant to the opening (0:00 – 1:12), in which he directly mocks the crooner musical style and its claim to authenticity (see Figure 10). Using a combination of eye-rolling (0:31, 1:01) and knowing eyebrow raises (0:49), Vicious transgresses the fourth wall between himself and the film viewer, communicating a disbelief in his own performance. The stereotypical "gay" limp wrist at (0:36) also comments on his performance. It is "gay," a concept that is treated disparagingly by lyrics, as we have already seen, and remains a derogatory term to this day. Like the other gestures, the intended audience is the film viewer, not the *in situ* concert audience who cheer the sign of homosexuality, apparently blithely ignorant of the gesture's disparaging intent. In fact, through the cognitive dissonance provoked by their approbation, the film audience comes to understand, in the manner of a private joke between them and Vicious, that he is pulling one over on the Olympia's patrons. This secondary level of interaction highlights the ironic distance Vicious maintains with respect to the base song, pulling the cover strongly away from the audience's expressive universe.

When the "crooner" section ends and the overdriven electric guitar comes in at 1:14, Vicious's demeanor changes from one of obvious false pomposity to one that appears to be, for him, a more comfortable sneering punk rocker persona. The gestural repertoire also changes from the obviously inauthentic and subversive eye-rolling, eyebrow-raising, and limp-wristing to pursed-lip sneers, teeth-ripping head shakes (like a dog ripping a piece of

Fig. 11 – "Punk" section physical gestures

"When there was fuck, bugger-all else to do" (2:09)

"I shot it up" (2:19)

"I kicked it out" (2:22)

"I killed a cat" (3:00)

"When he wears hats" (3:22)

"As tears subside" (2:49)

meat), defiant fist shakes, and falsely innocent looks ("Oh, no, not me!"). These gestures underscore two détournements. First, they visually mark the parametric shift of genre second: as the music changes, so does the embodiment, and vice-versa.[36] Secondly, they transition from the ideological space of "the mainstream," with its audience ingratiation and artifice, to the ideological space of "punk authenticity." What is being performed is the emergence of the "real" Sid Vicious from within the song and the decisive departure from any overt reference to Sinatra.

The new gestural repertoire comments on the unchanged lyrics from the original, taking them out of their confessional, intimate, and "sincere" context and placing them into one of defiance and aggression. There are, however, a number of exceptions (Figure 11). The only moment when a lyric change coincides with a physical comment on the lyric is the

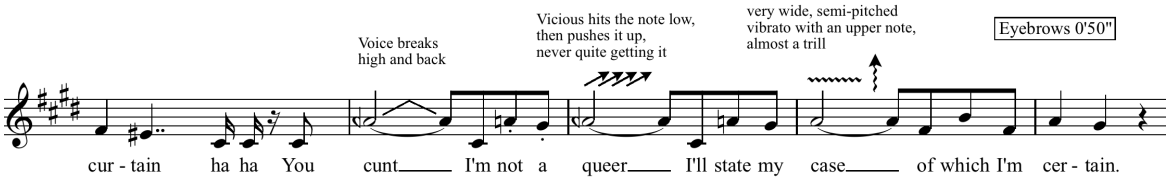
[36] Julien Temple relates that "[Vicious] wanted to do it like the Ramones, but we tried to convince him to do the opening bit like Sinatra and then kick in to the Ramones bit, which in the end is how it happened." See Parker, *No One Is Innocent*, 157.

eye-rolling look of mild exasperation Vicious enacts with the line "when there was fuck-, bugger-all else to do" (2:09). Here, the mocking attitude of the lyrics is supported by the exaggerated facial expression. There are four moments where changes in words coincide with gesture revolving around the miming of lyrics: "I shot it up" (2:19), "I kicked it out" (2:22), "I killed a cat" (3:00), and "…when he wears hats" (3:22). These moments represent some of the most potent tactics present in the song. In each case, the physical acts performed by Vicious reinforce lyric changes, drawing attention to them but also displacing their expressivity from music—where the expressivity is mostly found in Sinatra's performances—into the body. The notable exception is when Vicious sings the original lyric "as tears subside" (2:49) while indicating tears with his finger. This has the effect of over-determining the meaning, making it ironic, distanced, and insincere. In the rest of the cases, Vicious is explaining the words with his actions, emphasizing the passages and their transgressive natures.

Vicious uses his voice as yet another way to either détourne the original lyrics or emphasize word changes, gestures, or sometimes both. As we have seen, Vicious opens the song with an obviously exaggerated chest voice (when the singer uses their chest as the main vocal resonance cavity) that mocks the prototypical crooner baritone. Just as with his movement vocabulary, the voice has a parametric aspect, structuring the song into "crooner" and "punk" sections. For this analysis, however, I am interested in how Vicious uses his voice within the melodic framework to comment on the song and his performance.

Example 21 shows how the words "cunt" and "queer" are sung on notes that are a microtone flat against the band's A (illustrated above by a quarter tone flat sign).

Ex. 21 – Vocal tactics in Verse 1



In both cases, Vicious also pushes to raise the pitch to a normal A4 without success; on "cunt," he causes his voice to break high, and on "queer," the upward pressure is unremitting but never brings the note into tune. Since he sings normally tuned As on "not" and "state," this is clearly not an issue of competence, but of emphasis on two key words. Because these words recall "others" (women and homosexuals), their off-tuned pitches also inhabit an "other" world: they do not belong with the surrounding music. With the word "case," Vicious's voice wavers so much as to become a trill, rapidly alternating with the in-tune A and a non-descript higher pitch. The now normalized A is simultaneously combined with the "othered" pitch world.

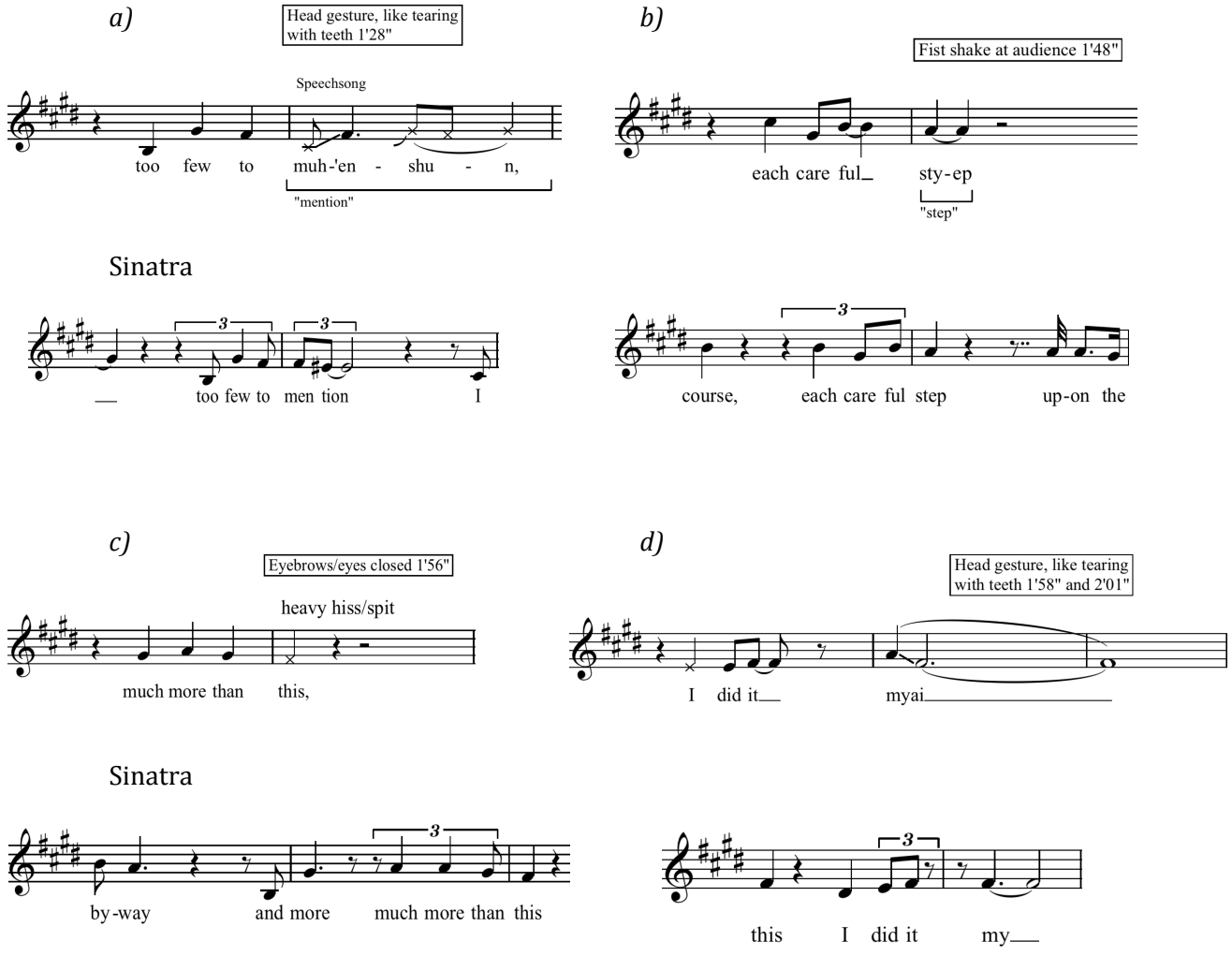
By the change of texture to the Ramones-inflected guitar passage beginning at 1:14, Vicious adopts a nasal head voice (when the singer uses their head as the main resonance cavity). He thereafter rhythmically and performatively distorts words. Examples 22 a-d illustrate these moments compared to their analogues in Sinatra (Vicious is the upper example of each letter). Where Sinatra treats upbeats more freely, Vicious's are mechanical 3 quarter-note patterns (2a and c), sometimes slightly syncopated (2b and d). He replaces Sinatra's mostly unadorned beats 1 and 2 with more elaborate gestures from his idiosyncratic—and certainly not "correct"—pronunciation.[37] Mispronunciation works two

[37] This is a clear example of Laing's contention that mispronunciation is meant to question the sincerity of the lyrics. By way of example, Laing uses Johnny Rotten's rolled "R" in the word "moron" in "God Save The Queen," as an example of how the Sex Pistols were not being serious with their attack on the monarch. See Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, 58.

ways, however, where a rhythmic distortion can also call into question a musical trope. Vicious alters the sentimental sixth trope to bring it in line with the quarter note pulse. Instead of the gesture being a lilting upbeat, it becomes metronomic, square, and straight.

In addition to verbal and rhythmic distortions, Vicious also alters his singing style, either to cast doubt on the pitch, or to abandon it almost completely (Example 22). By using scoops (a) and glissandi (a and c), he makes the existence of a defined scale degree largely ephemeral, often lost in the swooping to and away from the center of the note.

Ex. 22 – Vicious's vocal interpretations compared to Sinatra's

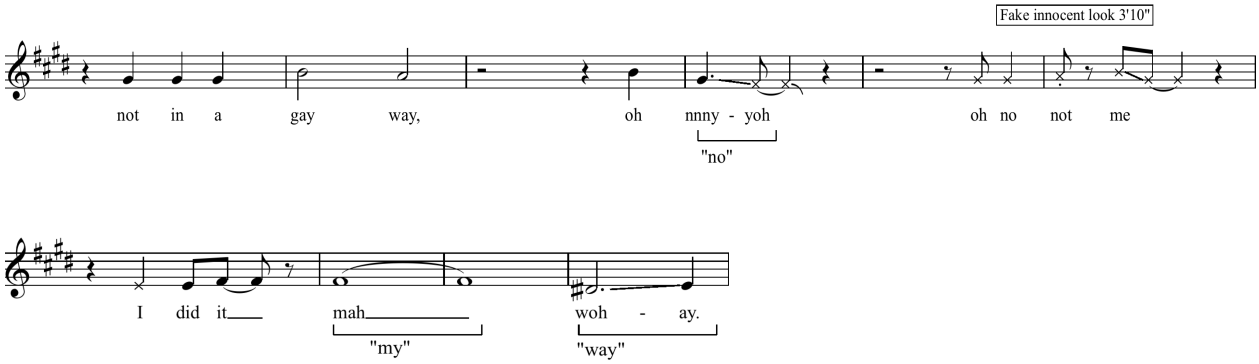


These effects obscure the sung pitches (and, to some extent the rhythms) all the more when used in conjunction with pitch-inflected speech. Not unlike *Sprechstimme,* Vicious sometimes partially abandons pitch, creating a kind of heavily inflected speaking voice (inflections are notated with "x" noteheads approximating pitches). These result in what sound like moments of frustration, an emotion that transforms singing into shouting (a and c). Just like the trilled A in "case" above, pitch-inflected speech moves the music into an "other" world where even the conventions of singing, to say nothing of Sinatra-style bel canto, are almost wholly dropped to make way for expression.[38] As "My Way" develops, Vicious uses these tactics more frequently and for longer times spans to détourne original lyrics but also increasingly to reinforce his own lyrical changes.

The passage in Example 23 demonstrates how Vicious ultimately saturates the music with his various vocal tactics, moving from scooping and falling to pitch-inflected speech to out of tune notes (the D-sharp on "way" is actually quarter tone higher) to altered downbeat rhythms. This passage also links lyric changes, physical gestures, and vocal performance to show their overlap and intensification and, thus, the degree to which Vicious is moving further and further into metamorphic territory, away from the base song in pursuit of his own expression.

[38] What Vicious does is to move in and out of song, exploring a gray area that I think has a very different effect than in Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912). In the latter—almost entirely in *Sprechstimme*—it is used as a technique, learned and crafted, and lends the music a sense of artificiality that is a part the expression. Vicious, on the other hand, is using outbursts of pitch-inflected speech as markers of authentic voice, definitely not something he studied or practiced. Other scholars have discussed *Sprechstimme* as a punk technique, see Caroline O'Meara, "The Raincoats: Breaking down Punk Rock's Masculinities," *Popular Music* 22, no. 3 (October 1, 2003): 309.

Ex. 23 – Saturation of vocal tactics in Verse 3



Sound Structures

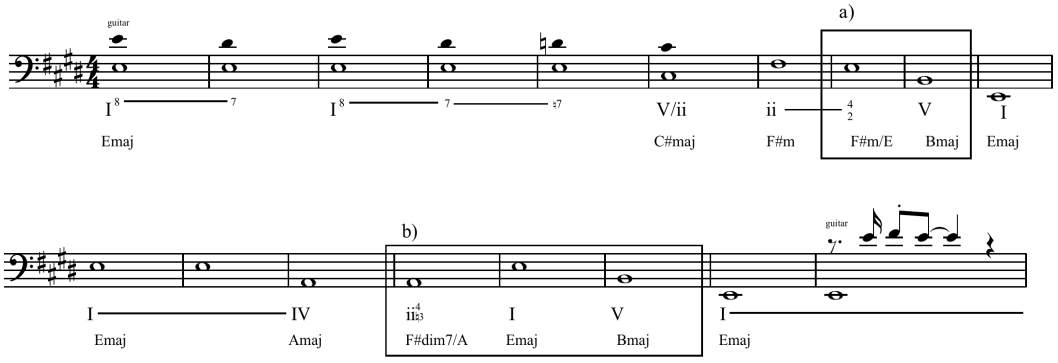
If Sinatra's restrained physical performance represented an opening for Vicious to détourne "My Way" by elaborating meanings verbally, physically, and vocally, then the refined and well-crafted musical materials of the song afforded him the opportunity to simplify and remove compositional artifice. This becomes a powerful tactic for making metamorphic changes within a preexisting musical context while, at the same time, preserving the context enough so that it is still recognizable.

Despite the vocal performance tactics discussed in the previous section, the melody of "My Way" as it is manifest in Sinatra's and Vicious's versions is remarkably similar. The most obvious change is certainly the increasing *lack* of it as Vicious's version progresses, and as sung pitches are replaced by pitch-inflected speech approximations (and eventually shouting). The rhythms that Vicious employs tend to be much squarer than Sinatra's, who maintains a fairly consistent triplet feel and frequently holds notes over strong beats—singing "between" beats as it were. Such subtlety and sophistication of rhythm is rarely present in Vicious's performance—his distortions of words on some downbeats being the few intricate outliers. But there is another element of Sinatra's performance that Vicious's

version strips away that is even more telling, one that has implications both for rhythmic and melodic expression.

While it uses the chord structure of its base song, Vicious's "My Way" presents its harmonies much less elaborately, and effectively nullifies all of the tropes discussed in Chapter 2. As Example 24 makes clear, the chromatic bass line in Sinatra's is present in Vicious's, but as an *inner voice*. This simplifies the harmony to an E major pedal for the first few measures instead of the more convoluted and angst-ridden chromatic bass trope in Sinatra. Moreover, just as in François, the diatonic descent is not present at all. In fact, its absence creates one of two moments when the musical semantics disconnect. The II^4_2 chord in m. 8 moves directly to V in root position, leaving the seventh unresolved (24a). The second is when the II^4_3 chord of the fourteenth measure moves through I to V (24b). This creates a harmonic discontinuity by having a modally mixed pre-dominant move to tonic before dominant harmony, and, in so doing, nullifies the double suspension "pathos" trope. No longer is there a cadential 6/4 to create the effect of the sequential suspensions; all that is left is the 9-8 on the downbeat of the sixteenth measure.

Ex. 24 – Nullification of chromatic and diatonic basses

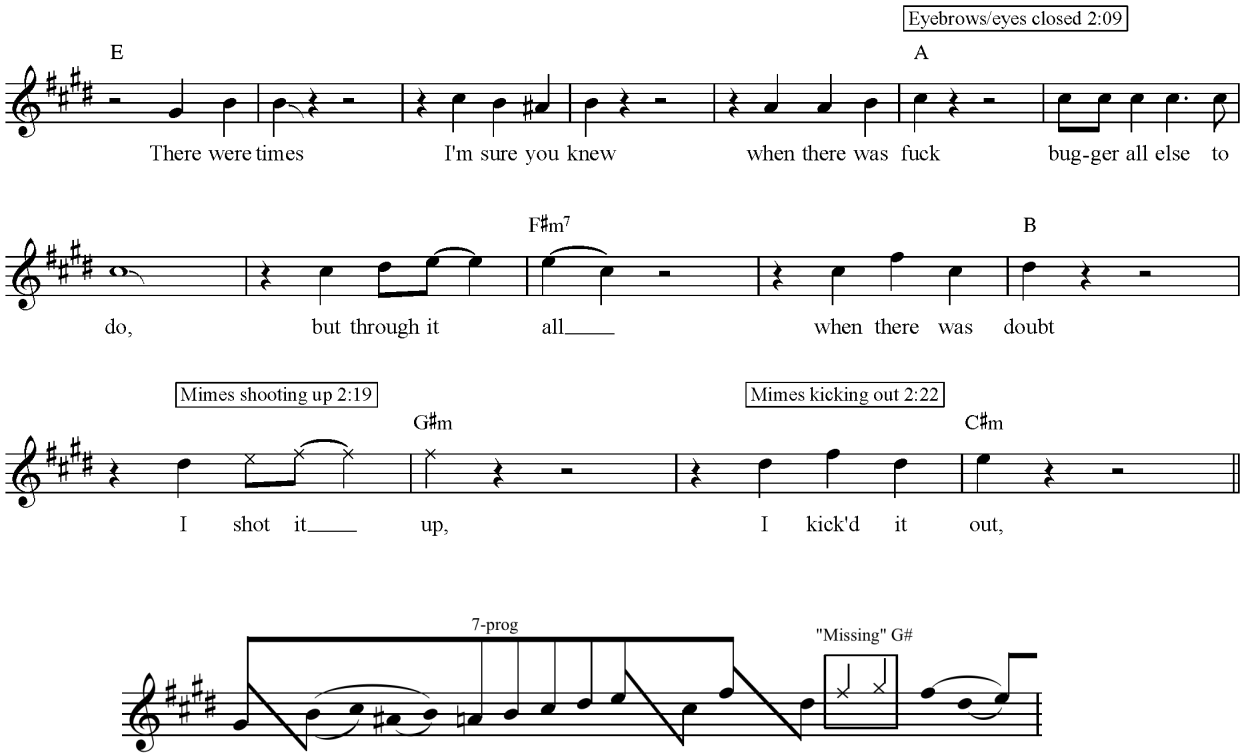


As I argued in Chapter 2, among the most dramatic parts of "My Way" and "Comme d'habitude" are the anacrusis climaxes in the chorus sections. The unremittingly regular drives to the downbeat coupled with the concomitant rise of the melody—transferring the fundamental line up the octave—the density of the orchestra, the increasing complexity of the counterpoint, and the gradually increasing volume made for a very marked and strong climax. Sid Vicious's version attacks this trope from several vantage points, divesting it of its markedness and of its resolution. The first such metamorphic change is found in rhythm. Laing has described a rhythmic flattening in punk music produced by the overlaying of the bass and guitar "wall of sound" in 1 + 1 monadic patterns (called a "buzzsaw drone" and having no emphasized beats) over the "submerged" drum 1 + 2 dyad.[39] The overlay lends the music a certain rhythmic formlessness that removes the clear divisions between stanzas. In "My Way," the result is a complete flattening of the anacrusis climax's rhythmic dimension. What was marked has now become unmarked. The passage sounds little different from the verses, which themselves emphasize the downbeat with equal strength.

The second aspect of the anacrusis climax that is contested is the octave transfer of the fundamental line. Also a victim of the constant loud volume of the wall of sound, which threatens to submerge the voice at any moment, the rise of the vocal line is not made with a crescendo. When the voice reaches the climax at which the transfer is to be completed, Vicious does not sing but shouts the lyrics. The transfer is never made; with such a loud volume, the only possible way to get louder is to abandon singing all together (Example 25).

[39] Laing specifically refers to this as being one of the traits of the Ramones. Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, 62.

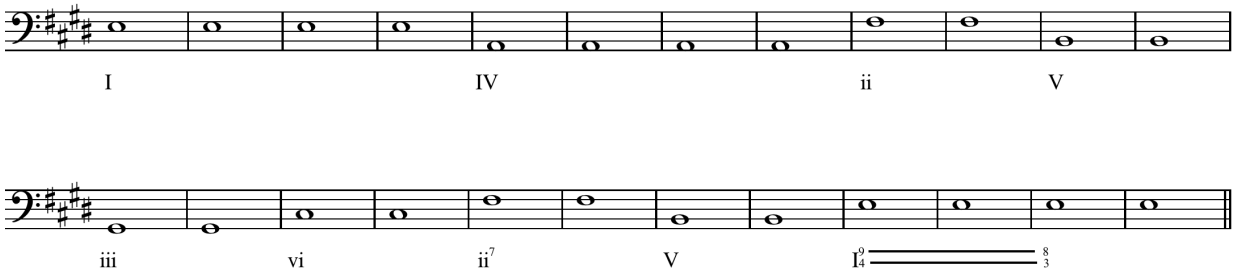
Ex. 25 – Incomplete octave transfer in Chorus 2 (transcription and graph)



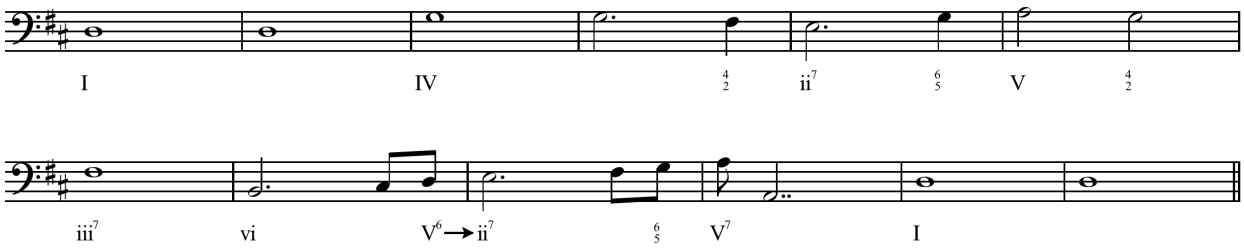
By doing so, the closing melodic motion G#-F#-E is never articulated. The failed octave transfer thus denies two expectations: its own completion, and the completion of the fundamental line descent in the upper register.

Ex. 26 – Variances in bass activity and harmonic rhythm in Chorus 2

a) Vicious



b) Sinatra (NB – 2 mm. of Vicious = 1 m. of Sinatra)



The final altered element of the anacrusis climax is its use of harmonic rhythm. In Example 26, both bass lines from the "Yes, there were times" chorus are compared. It is easily observable that the bass line in Sinatra's version is much more contrapuntally active than in Vicious's. Indeed, Sinatra's more active bass line is mirrored in the overall musical texture, with its soaring string counter-melody and brass fanfares. The faster-paced harmonic changes are an integral part of the intensity the various elements of the anacrusis climax are bringing together. As I have noted above, the harmonies in Vicious's version have been stripped of their contrapuntal elaborations, but the acceleration of harmonic rhythm towards the end of the phrase is also minimally reproduced as some chords last two measures rather than four. Even if we do not count changes of inversion, Sinatra's still accelerates the harmonic rhythm when VI becomes V^6/II. In this way the harmonic impetus behind the anacrusis crescendo is neutered in Vicious's version, adding its leveling effect to the other neutered aspects of the trope above.

The effect of diffusing the markedness of the anacrusis climax has reverberations most importantly felt at the level of form. Whereas Sinatra's "My Way" is built along a traditional Tin Pan Alley format (AABA, but in this case slightly modified to AABAB), Vicious's more closely resembles through-composition. Its musical contrasts are less clear,

its intensity level is far more uniform, and its sections are consequently less obvious save for the lyrical cues (the rhyme scheme being one of the few preserved markers of form). Though there is a definite break between the "crooner" and "punk" sections at 1:14, the subsequent sections do not share as much differentiation as Sinatra's. This "flatness" of musical profile—the same instrumentation, dynamics, the same or slower rate of chord changes, the voice's incomplete melodic rise—neuters the climax of the original, leaving the real work of intensification to Vicious's performative tactics. Thus he acts out more, changes more lyrics, and uses more elaborate vocal interpretations more frequently as the song continues. The images of violence in the lyrics, as well as in his body and voice, all proliferate over the various musical sections until the final "my way" results in Vicious omitting the final tonic (E). Instead he screams the lyric before throwing down the microphone, drawing a gun, and shooting into the audience seven times before flipping everyone off and walking away back up the staircase.

The violence that was hitherto an artifact of performance and musical interpretation enthusiastically appreciated by the Olympia's audience, becomes, for them, suddenly and catastrophically real. Since Vicious has, from the beginning, made clear the double entendre of his performance to the film viewer—feigning sincerity to the Olympia patrons while knowingly raising his eyebrows at us—his final act has the uncomfortable consequence of suggesting the film viewer's acceptance of and complicity in the mass murder at the end of the sequence. Thus the *performative* climax of the song is, in Laing's terminology, a "structural and integrated shock effect," one that goes further than trauma and causes increased awareness on the part of the listener.[40] It is the greatest détournement of the

[40] Ibid., 79.

whole cover: it brings the song to an abrupt end and alters the meaning of the words "my way" forever for listeners. The music, which began in a mockery of crooning, ends as a prototype of Punk's "no future," just like many characters in attendance at the Olympia, and just like Vicious himself several months later.[41]

Discussion: Othering, Exclusion, Recuperation, Inclusion

"A politics of subversive quotation, of cutting the vocal cords of every empowered speaker, social symbols yanked through the looking glass, misappropriated words and pictures diverted into familiar scripts and blowing them up."[42] Although Marcus meant this definition for the concept of détournement, it applies equally well to *in extremis* examples of metamorphic covers like Sid Vicious's "My Way." Détournement is, to varying degrees, the practice of metamorphic covering: meanings are inverted, the powerless become powerful, and contexts are upended. All of this can be readily seen in Vicious's cover. The triumphalism of "My Way" is turned into nihilism, Sinatra's mature bel canto is mocked and then replaced by a sneering, nasal, and youthful punk voice, and the adoring audience is not indulged but ridiculed and subsequently gunned down. In *Hardcore, Punk, and Other Junk* (2014), I describe Vicious's cover as being so extreme as to be considered cannibalistic. I argue that Sid Vicious not only changes the song, but utterly destroys and degrades it.[43] However, I assert that he inverts the cannibalistic trope. Instead of making of his enemy the

[41] "No future" is a reference to "God Save The Queen" in which Rotten sings "God save the Queen/She ain't no human being/There is no future/In England's dreaming." It later became a slogan widely used in the punk subculture.
[42] Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*, 179.
[43] Evan Ware, "Food For Thought: On Sid Vicious's Cannibalization of 'My Way,'" Eric James Abbey and Colin Helb, eds., *Hardcore, Punk, and Other Junk: Aggressive Sounds in Contemporary Music* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014), 14–16.

redoubtable and cannibalistic "other," he is dehumanizing and "othering" *himself*. As we have seen, what lyrical changes he made to the song have the effect, for the most part, of drawing in issues of gay sex, violent and self-destructive actions, and the trappings of anti-social personalities. To further emphasize his exclusion, he relies on a repertoire of physical gestures that contrast markedly with Sinatra's staid physicality. Teeth-ripping and defiant fist-shaking are frequently recurring actions, homosexuality is referenced and stereotyped with a "gay" limp wrist, and some of the more violent images in the changed lyrics are mimed (shooting up, killing cats).[44] The musical interpretation, divested of much of its artifice and running contrary to fundamental expectations of melody, harmony, voice leading, and form, also become othered. There is none of Sinatra's triumph or self-satisfaction to be found in any of these changes, and thus there is no consolation. Othering and exclusion, the reduction of musical artifice, the proliferation of performative artifice, and the use of détournement all move Vicious's version resolutely away from homology with Sinatra's "My Way."

The exclusionary aspect of punk has been noted in its reception. Lawrence Chua (2000) has called the Sex Pistols's music "profoundly non-human," and many punks themselves supposedly thought they were the "niggers of the world."[45] Yet, Vicious's song is not completely excluded. It is not a derivative, but still a cover of "My Way." This means that there must be some recuperation of the song into the orbit of the original. In Sheldon Schiffer's account (2010), punks' "acts of resistance [are] not against the host nation and

[44] It is interesting to note, however, that the cat-killing mime looks more like Vicious is slitting his own wrists, making this ominously prescient; Vicious would attempt suicide by slitting his wrists while awaiting trial for Nancy Spungeon's murder only a few months after the "My Way" sequence was filmed in 1978.
[45] Lawrence Chua and Julien Temple, "Julien Temple," *BOMB*, no. 72 (July 1, 2000), 43. Maurizio Viano, "Sid and Nancy," *Film Quarterly* 40, No. 3 (Spring 1987), 37.

culture of the United Kingdom, but against exclusion from it."[46] The argument is particularly interesting in light of Malcolm McLaren's claim (2007) that he was in talks to get Vicious a regular gig in Las Vegas as the "only punk candidate to fill Elvis's shoes."[47] The point is echoed in Maurizio Viano's review of the film *Sid and Nancy* (1987), in which he discusses the paradox of Vicious's "My Way": in seeking success, Vicious engages with the music that the Sex Pistols were attacking.[48] This paradox defines metamorphic covers: though they strive for difference, they are always tethered to their originals. They *rely* on their original for part of their meaning.

A metamorphic cover, therefore, cannot be wholly excluded. It must participate in some kind of recuperation. In the case of punk rock, Laing calls this "partial incorporation"

> …a manner of discussing punk rock which "domesticated" it not by re-admitting it directly into the discursive formation of the popular music mainstream, but by demonstrating how it shared many of the "normal" features of dicourses congruent with the cultureal mainstream... This was done in three main ways: presenting individuall punks as *family* members, metaphorically populating punk with familiar social types (Angry Young Men, a Queen, etc.) and, more specifically, placing punk rock within the "family" of rock music, giving it a biography and a musical parentage.[49]

In the context of the film sequence, it is clear that there are other elements of recuperation at work as well. Familiar types (Sid Vicious as an angry young man) and punks as victims of greedy commercialism (the premise of *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle,* which brings punk in line with some of rock's anti-commercial views) are a part of the cover's constellation. Furthermore, punk appeals to sincerity (in which obscenity is defended as a form of speaking truth to power) also sheds light on this version: the whole interaction between

[46] Sheldon Schiffer, "The Cover Song as Historiography, Marker of Ideological Transformation," *Play It Again: Cover Songs in Popular Music,* George Plasketes, ed. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 85.
[47] Malcolm McLaren, "Forward," Parker, *No One Is Innocent*, 4.
[48] Viano, 36.
[49] Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, 101–102.

Vicious and the audiences (of the show and of the film) revolves around the idea of stripping notions of "correct" or "normal" musical aesthetics in favour of tactics that speak to truth, to rage, to hopelessness, to anti-social behaviour, and to addiction.[50] In this way, Vicious's version can be understood as a form of the avant-garde, a description that is itself a form of recuperation. Rather than a wholly new expression, Vicious's "My Way" and punk are considered another incarnation of the avant-garde, its aesthetics, and genres.

Vicious's cover, and metamorphic covers in general, could be thought of as a *partial exclusions and recuperations*. As such, each has to contend with its own inherent contradiction between wanting to reiterate a recognizable cultural form, while trying to do so as differently as possible. Perhaps, then, the ending of the Vicious version is best understood as an overreaction to that contradiction. The only way to put the permanent tension to rest is to destroy the source, kill the audience. Seen another way,

> For decades, pulp rock novels had ended with a scene out of The Golden Bough, with the ritual devouring of the star by his followers, and Sid Vicious was begging for it: for the absolute confirmation that he was a star.[51]

Since Vicious forestalls the devouring with gunfire, this tandem view of him remains unresolved. It is, as Marcus has described, a situation with no future, "a frank and determined embrace of moments in which the world seems to change, moments that leave nothing behind but dissatisfaction, disappointment, rage, sorrow, isolation, and vanity."[52] I would add that, in this case, it leaves a very changed cover as well.

[50] Ibid., 104.
[51] Greil Marcus, "Martian Genes," *The Threepenny Review*, no. 26 (July 1, 1986): 22.
[52] Marcus, *Lipstick Traces,* 446.

CHAPTER 4

Isomorphic Covers:
A Canadian lounge singer negotiates Elvis Presley and Frank Sinatra

> "So, 'My Way,' to me, isn't even an Elvis song anymore, and it's not a Frank song anymore—well it is, but… when I think about it, I think about it [as] a 'me' song. And that's really what 'My Way' is. Whoever sings it, if they're really putting it across, they're singing about themselves."
>
> –J. P. MacDonald, a.k.a. Johnny Vegas[1]

Accessing the Esthesic: Ethnography and Music Analysis

On 21 February 1995, Ottawa singer J. P. MacDonald became his alter ego, Johnny Vegas, a chain-smoking, hard-drinking, Sinatra idolizing, has-been Las Vegas lounge singer for the first time. "My name is Johnny Vegas and I've made smoking and drinking in bars my life-long art," he would later declare at the end of his sets. Within the year his act moved from a cozy pub on Elgin Street, one of the most bustling nightlife quarters in Canada's capital, to Maxwell's Bistro, a more upscale restaurant down the street whose second floor is a bar complete with stage area and dance floor. The band expanded from voice and piano, adding bass guitar and drums. The event became known as Lounge Nite, a tribute to the

[1] The ethnographic information presented in this chapter was obtained during fieldwork in Ottawa as well as in follow-up email questions. The information originates from three main sources. Foremost among these are two interviews I conducted with J. P. Macdonald in Ottawa on 28 November 2013 and 2014. Further details are provided from my own recollections, checked against those of Robin Karuna, Jason Davenport, and Kristopher Waddell, all Lounge Nite regulars in the period from 1998 to 2002. I transcribed "My Way" from a recording made at Maxwell's by my wife, Megan Hill, on 26 November 2013. This recording, a fairly standard and representative rendition of Vegas's performance of the song, is the basis of the transcriptions presented later.

singers that made up Vegas's original core set list: Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Bobby Darin, Wayne Newton, Burt Bacharach, Barry Manilow, and Elvis Presley. Through the rise and fall of the lounge and swing revivals of the 1990s, the advent of the indoor smoking ban, changing clienteles, and changing ownerships, MacDonald fronted the Johnny Vegas Orchestra every Wednesday night starting around 9 pm, playing until the wee small hours. It was at Maxwell's, from around the fall of 1998 through 2002, that my friends and I were regulars, drawn by the social dancing scene, the chance to sport our pinstripes, to flirt, to unwind, to let loose. We rarely missed a Wednesday night. In those years, "My Way," often the last song of the evening, transformed from something I associated abstractly with Sinatra into a living, changing cover song performed by an entertainer, a friend, and an eventual collaborator. The song was Johnny's.

The case studies have thus far presented instances of songs that, though they share important musical similarities, nevertheless also bear some significant differences that clearly differentiate them from each other. Derivatives, such as "Comme d'habitude," and metamorphic covers, such as Sid Vicious's "My Way," are necessarily rich in analytical potential since their divergences are so extensive. Differences between these cover songs and their originals extend beyond variations in isolated moments or aspects of the music. Instead, changes have been wrought on whole parameters, affecting the entirety of the songs. Substituting completely new lyrics, covering a song in another musical genre, or staging visual and performative elements in stark contrast to the originals are all examples of the far-reaching tactics of covers or derivatives that were intended to be significantly different from their base song. Including the two previous case studies, scholarship on

cover songs has understandably tended to focus on such parametric shifts.[2] They are fundamental and unambiguously distinguish the cover from the original.

Knottier topics for analysis are versions like Johnny Vegas's, what I call "isomorphic covers," whose interpretations tend toward homology with the base song. Since isomorphic covers are cases where imitation is to some extent more important than interpretation, tactics on the part of the performers are prone to be less marked than they would be in a metamorphic example. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that more faithful adaptations convey less information or are somehow less worthy of scholarly attention. Steven Feld (1984) makes the point:

> For any given society, everything that is socially salient will not necessarily be musically marked. But for all societies, everything that is musically salient will undoubtedly be socially marked, albeit in a great variety of ways, some more superfluous than others.[3]

If, as he says, that which is musically significant is necessarily socially significant, then *any* changes from one version of a song to another have some degree of significance. As such, they are indicative of the cover performer's habitus. In other words, a performer will change that which they feel is important to change based on their own subjectivity and context, leaving behind such analyzable traces as choice of performance venue, appearance and dress, body language, choice of chords, use of vocal rhythms, etc. Therefore, the analysis of isomorphic covers can be said to be primarily concerned with the quality of change rather than quantity or degree. A focus on the qualitative, and therefore the more subjective, aspects of a cover brings our inquiry into the orbit of Nattiez's and Molino's esthesic level in the musical fact.

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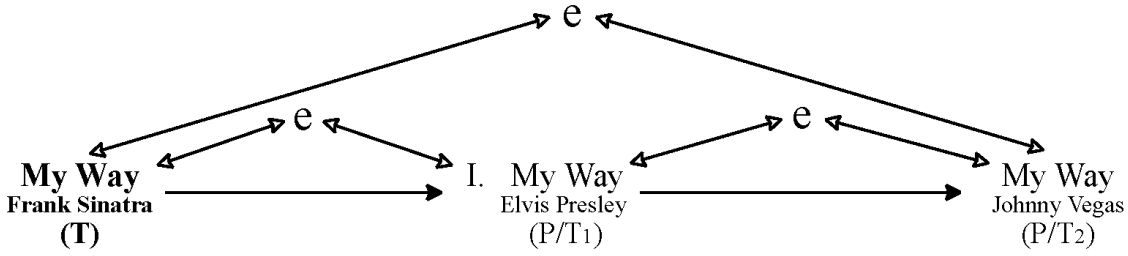
[2] The sources cited in the literature review in Chapter 1 do this. See Chapter 1, footnotes 23-27.
[3] Steven Feld, "Sound Structure as Social Structure," *Ethnomusicology* 28, no. 3 (September 1, 1984): 406.

Reception proves very a beneficial lens through which to comprehend situations in which there are more than one base song. As we saw in Chapter 1, an "original" need not be the chronological first, but simply the song with the most cultural sway over a given cover. It is perfectly conceivable, therefore, that any cover could be in a system that is more than simply binary. MacDonald, refers to this exact issue in his quotation at the outset of this chapter. In the present concept of base song, MacDonald's version of "My Way" has *two*: Elvis Presley's recording from his 1977 *Elvis In Conccert* performance *and* the Sinatra recording.

Fig. 12 — Diagram of the influences on Johnny Vegas's "My Way"



Analyzing how MacDonald-as-Vegas fashions his own isomorphic cover of the song out of two different antecedents is the central task of this chapter. This requires a means to analyze the point of contact between musician and music and, by extention, to examine how the musician's habitus changes the sounds, and how the sounds are traces of the habitus.

Vegas's "My Way," and isomorphic covers in general, can be fruitfully understood by combining the two analytic vectors above. On the one hand, the cover performer's reception of the original leads us toward understanding their musical decisions, and on the other, the cover performance contains traces that lead back to the performer's reception—and reaction to—the original. Over the course of the previous chapters, I have formed a

body of music-analytic data focusing on the latter, built on the tropes identified in Chapter 2, and expanded through the analysis of melodic interpretation and form in Chapter 3. These, however, account for only one of the vectors, musical-to-social. The other, social-to-musical, must now be brought into the discussion.

Tia DeNora's work (2000) on the ways in which individuals use music in daily life connects importantly with my purpose to analyze the point of connection between social actors and the music they make. Refuting the view that music is a force that acts on people, she instead argues that music and the people that use it are co-productive of each other:

> Our focus needs to move away from one or the other pole of the 'artefact-actor' divide to… the topic of 'how to do things with things'; this means a focus on the interactions between people and things. There is no short cut to this issue; only ethnographic research will do, and only ethnographic research has the power to elaborate our conceptualization of what such processes entail…[4]

DeNora's aim of using ethnographic work to examine the points of contact between music and the individuals that use it is at the heart of this chapter's methodology. I think it is important, however, to avoid reifying the binary opposition of actor and artefact and, thus, throw out music analysis with the proverbial bathwater as itself a reification of the artefact alone. As DeNora suggests, music is not a world unto itself, and therefore all levels of the musical fact are socially embedded. Music's trace is no exception; it is a trace of social action, and structural analysis is a means of revealing that action. Music and its users are never exactly separate but are part of a co-productive system, or structural coupling, in which something of each continues to subsist in the other. Thus, *pace* DeNora, ethnography alone will not do. It must be a central part of a larger epistemological conversation.

A question remains: by what means can ethnography and structural analysis be put

[4] Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 38–39.

in dialogue with each other? In the article "Sound Structure as Social Structure," Feld establishes a framework that has potential for acting as a bridge. He divides his ethnographic observations into several categories to account for various aspects of musical experience such as: "competence," "performance," "theory," "environment," "form," and "value and equality."[5] Since these categories were meant to enable a comparative ethnomusicology of the various small egalitarian societies of the Papuan plateau, not all of these categories apply to questions surrounding the reception and performance of isomorphic covers in a Euro-American context. In Table 4, I propose an adaptation of Feld's model, based on categories that I have used in Chapters 2 and 3, that is more closely suited to the concerns of the present study.

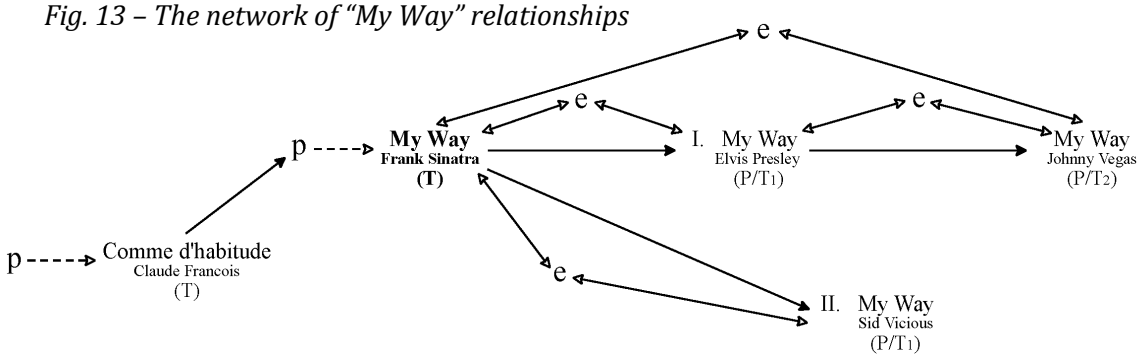
Table 4 – An ethnographic framework for isomorphic covers

Musical Competence	• What is the consultant's musical background? • What is their personal history with the songs? • Which versions do they know? • How did they come to know them?	**Performance Act**	• How does the performer embody their interpretation of the song? • How do they change lyrics and other para-musical elements?
Performance Context	• Historical, social, and material circumstances of a cover's performance. • How does context change a cover? • How does the song fit in with the received view of the performer?	**Sound Structures**	• How are the sound structures of the cover changed from the original? • What changes does the consultant make consciously and why? • What changes does the consultant not address and what are their ramifications?

[5] Feld, "Sound Structure as Social Structure," 386–388.

The usefulness of this approach lies in its flexibility. Categories that tend less toward matters of musical structure, such as "Musical Competence" and "Performance Context" are put in immediate relation with those that do, such as "Performance Act" and "Sound Structures." The former will be used as a basis against which to check for concordance in the latter. Furthermore, the last two categories act as important bridges to the previous case studies, bringing out issues of visual performance, lyrical change, vocal interpretation, and form discussed with regard to Sid Vicious and revisiting the how the tropes seen in relation to Sinatra and François are used in their new context. This final case study, therefore, acts as a capstone to the analytical enterprise of the whole dissertation, drawing together previous methodologies, addressing the material trace and poietic dimensions of the musical fact, and putting them in dialogue with the esthesic (Figure 13).

Fig. 13 – The network of "My Way" relationships



Case Study 3: Johnny Vegas's "My Way" at Lounge Nite (1995-2014)

Musical Competence

As a musician, J. P. MacDonald is mostly an autodidact. His only formal musical education consisted of learning trumpet in high school. The bulk of his musical education was experiential. After high school, he played bass for a number of years in various cover

bands before joining the rhythm section of a moderately successful lounge act, part of a rising trend in North America for musical nostalgia, particularly the reviving of old musical genres like lounge and swing.[6] Though his time with the band was brief, it gave him the inspiration for a smoking, drinking lounge act he wanted to do in the future. This, in essence, was Johnny Vegas's conception, though the singer did not yet have the name.

MacDonald's relationship with "My Way" as a performer began soon after, when he started making a list of songs for his future act. Combing through his family record collection, he came across Elvis Presley's 1977 release of the song on 45 rpm, issued shortly after Presley died.[7] As the has-been, self-abusing, former Las Vegas singer character of Johnny Vegas took shape, the song stayed. MacDonald felt that it connected to Vegas's status as a washout looking back on his life, particularly one who idolized Sinatra, as MacDonald envisioned the Johnny Vegas character doing. Though MacDonald did not say so, it is difficult to miss the parallels between the Johnny Vegas character and Presley in 1970s—the has-been status that Presley was trying to fight, the multiple vices, and the sense of self-caricature that pervades each performer's spectacle—that in many ways make Presley a *more* appropriate model than the stalwart and seemingly eternally classy Sinatra. Regardless of MacDonald's intentions, his choice of the character's name, *Vegas*, makes no distinctions. "Vegas" as a concept encompasses both Sinatra and Presley and affords MacDonald a certain flexibility in interpreting his character and his music.

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[6] The rise of swing, in particular, was fueled in part by the rediscovery of the Lindy Hop by Erin Stevens and Steven Mitchell under the tutelage of dancer (and postal worker) Frankie Manning in the early 1980s. By the end of the decade, the first major "Neo-Swing" bands started appearing, including The Brian Setzer Orchestra (1989) and Royal Crown Review (1989). See Tamara Stevens and Erin Stevens, *Swing Dancing* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2011), 168–169.

[7] Elvis Presley, *Elvis Presley - My Way*, 45 rpm (Canada: RCA, 1977), RCA-11165.

MacDonald's description of his decision to give the Presley version to pianist Peter Kiesewalter, who made the arrangements in anticipation of his 1995 Manx Pub gig, is resolutely materialist and matter-of-fact:[8]

> The thing is it was the only version of "My Way" that I had and back then, you know, there wasn't the same "go on the internet and find a version of 'My Way' or download it to your MP3 player," and I didn't want to go out and buy CDs. I had a version.

Whatever differences there might be between the Presley and Sinatra versions, they were not important enough to him at that moment to warrant spending money. Considering that prior to the name "Lounge Nite," his gig was called a Sinatra tribute, there was, from the beginning, an ambiguity surrounding *who* was being covered. The arrangement was based on Presley, but it was sung by a performer whose persona idolized Sinatra.

Performance Context

Economic and social pressures played a role in maintaining the ambiguous mix of elements from Sinatra and Presley in Johnny Vegas's performative and musical identity. MacDonald's 1995 start date coincided with the rapid phase of the Swing Revival's ascendancy toward its apex at the end of the millenium (1998-2000).[9] This meant that many patrons were looking for venues at which they could dance, not just listen. Location, thus, had an important effect on the arrangement and performance and which versions it would evoke. At the Manx, voice and piano were the only instruments that could fit in the

[8] An accomplished musician, Kiesewalter later left Ottawa and went on to found the East Village Opera Company and the Brooklyn Rundfunk Orkestra in New York City.

[9] Neo-Lounge bands like Combustible Edison began releasing singles in 1993, while Neo-Swing bands Big Bad Voodoo Daddy and The Cherry Poppin' Daddies released their first albums in 1994. Frankie Manning choreographed swing dancing scenes in Malcolm X (1992), and swing heavy soundtracks were featured in both Swing Kids (1993) and The Mask (1994). Stevens and Stevens, *Swing Dancing*, 170, 173; Eric Martin Usner, "Dancing in the Past, Living in the Present: Nostalgia and Race in Southern California Neo-Swing Dance Culture," *Dance Research Journal* 33, no. 2 (Winter 2001): Endnote 8.

venue. Regardless of the fact that Kiesewalter had arranged for this configuration from the Presley recording, the instrumentation did not reflect the piano, guitar, bass, and drums core of that version, to say nothing of the dozen or more other musicians playing on the track. When MacDonald moved to Maxwell's, the band expanded to include bass and drums, bringing it closer to Presley's version.

The dance floor itself was common neither to Presley's nor to Sinatra's gigs in Vegas where audiences were passive listeners, not active dancers. This fit with MacDonald's interests: "The holy trinity for me is band, dance floor, bar. Put them all next to each other and everyone's happy." Thus the performance space to some extent constructs the musical experience, affording instrumental and social configurations that weight the interpretation toward or away from Sinatra, Presley, or Johnny Vegas.

An aspect of performance context that is important to consider, other than venue and instrumentation, is the order in which the songs are played during an evening. For many years, certainly for the period when I was a Lounge Nite regular, "My Way" had the position of privilege as the last song of the evening, a kind of ecstatic—often drunken—climax that would send us all home after the tabs were settled. Occasionally, Vegas would do an encore of "One For My Baby (And One More For The Road)" afterward, but this was very rare. He remembers this slightly differently. He did not seem to think that it was too uncommon to shift "My Way" into a different position or to play it earlier if it was requested. He did, however, agree that it was performed much more frequently at the end of the night. As time went on, however, "My Way" lost its place as the regular final song.

> And then, quite frankly, if you look… I've got all my set lists, 'cause pretty much every Wednesday night I wrote out a new set list, and I could look back and actually see that there were several nights that went by in, say, the last two years even [where] "My Way" wasn't even on the list. 'Cause I was always trying to

> change it up, especially 'cause we got a girl in the band, Becky, and she's not in "My Way." "My Way" is like "get the hell off the stage." So I wasn't singing it nearly as much.

When I asked him if what pressures brought him to add a female vocalist to his band and to otherwise perform the song less frequently, he responded with characteristic pragmatism that:

> **JV**: Most of that, I think back then, I mean the early years was really heavy on the Rat Pack and Sinatra music and in the last several years not so much. Just trying to keep the masses coming out.
> **EW**: What changed?
> **JV**: Well, the main thing was corporate gigs and weddings. People wanted to hear more than just… sort of… It would be the same as hiring a disco band for your wedding. Disco's great, but disco all night long… may get a little worn out. Just like hip-hop all night long, or anything like that. You have to have variety.

This plays into how MacDonald currently organizes sets. He uses fifteen-minute segments of three up-tempo songs and one down-tempo song that he can mix with other segments of different genres. Thus, a rat pack set might be followed by a 1950s rock segment, which might be followed by a disco segment, or a country segment, or any number of other possibilities. With more generic ground to cover, playing "My Way" in the first set or not at all became a more frequent reality. In working to adapt to changing times, MacDonald had to change his relationship with his music and his persona, redefining them by a new ethos of aesthetic diversity, and thus by uncoupling them from their strong association with Sinatra. This cost Lounge Nite some of its swing dancers since they felt there was too little of their music being played. MacDonald is wholly unsentimental on this issue saying that "at the same time we gained a lot of other people that really liked to hear Neil Diamond, and Elvis Presley, and Van Morrison, The Beatles, or The Stones… other than just Frank and Dean and Sammy…" In other words, the economics are straightforward. By diversifying MacDonald can reach more people and get more gigs.

Performance Act

"The next song's a Frank Sinatra song," Vegas used to announce over a drum roll, "and you know what that means…" Everyone in the bar who was a regular would immediately respond in a collective shout, "Frank! Light! Johnny!" With that, Vegas would invite someone from the audience to stomp on a button that would activate lights around a portrait of Sinatra near the piano player. If the lights flashed in a certain pattern, the patron would get a free drink. By the time I recorded the concert for the present project, however, the use of the "Frank Light" as a framing device for all of an evening's Sinatra songs had been discontinued. In fact, the "Frank Light" was no longer present at all for the last several years of Lounge Night, ending sometime around 2008. By ending this practice, MacDonald was again moving Johnny Vegas away from his Sinatra roots and, in essence, freeing up the potential interpretations of "My Way" that he, the musicians, or the audience could make; it still could be a Sinatra song, but now it could also be an Elvis Presley song or a Johnny Vegas song.

Without a device that marks it as a Frank Sinatra song, and with "My Way" being dislodged from its position of privilege as the last song of the evening, MacDonald's vocal delivery is also open to a certain amount of interpretive flexibility. In my field recording, MacDonald uses this flexibility to stake out performative territory that lies somewhere between Presley, Vegas, and even MacDonald himself. To convey a sense of Presley's diction, MacDonald uses three elements of Southern dialect to greater or lesser degrees throughout his performance. The similarities and differences in pronunciation among the three performers are noted in Table 5.

Table 5 — Pronunciation variances (regular spellings indicate standard English pronunciations), colours denote pronunciations shared by two or more interpretations

	Sinatra	Presley	Vegas
V1	And so ***I*** face	And so ***Ah*** face	And so ***Ah*** face
	the final ***curtain***	the final ***curtain***	the final ***cuhtain***
	My friend, ***I***'ll say it clear	My friend, ***Ah***'ll say it clear	My friend, ***Ah***'ll say it clear
	I'll state my case of which ***I'm*** certain	***Ah'll*** state my case of which ***I'm*** certain	***Ah'll*** (aspirated) state my case of which ***Ah***'m certain
	I've lived a ***life*** that's full	***I've*** lived a ***life*** that's full	***Ah've*** lived a ***lahf*** that's full
	I've travel'd each and ev'ry ***highway***	***I've*** travel'd each and ev'ry ***hah-iway***	***Ah've*** travel'd each and ev'ry ***hah-iway***
	I did it ***my*** way (pronounced maaiiiiii)	***Ah*** did it ***my*** way (pronounced maaaaaah-i)	***I*** did it ***my*** way (pronounced maaiiiiii)
V2	***I've*** had a few	***I've*** had a few	***Ah've*** had a few
	I did what ***I*** had to do	***Ah*** did what ***I*** had to do	***I*** did what ***I*** had to do
	I planned each ***charted*** course	***Ah*** planned each ***charted*** course	***Ah*** planned each ***chahted*** course
	Along the ***byway***	Along the ***bahway***	Along the ***bahway***
	I did it ***maaiiiiii way***	***Ah*** did it ***maaaaaah-i way***	***I*** did it ***maaiiiiii way***
C1	***I'm sure*** you knew	***Ah'm sure*** you knew	***Ah'm shah*** you knew
	When ***I*** bit off more than ***I*** could chew	When ***Ah*** bit off more than ***Ah*** could chew	When ***Ah*** bit off more than ***Ah*** could chew
	I ate it up	***Ah*** ate it up	***I*** ate it up
	I faced it all and ***I*** stood tall	***Ah-i*** faced it all and ***Ah-i*** stood tall	***I*** faced it all and ***I*** stood tall
	And did it ***maaaaaah-i*** way	And did it ***maaaaaah-i*** way	And ***I*** did it ***maaaaiiii*** way
V3	***I've*** loved, ***I've*** laughed and cried	***Ah've*** loved, ***Ah've*** laughed and cried	***Ah've*** loved, ***Ah've*** (aspirated) laughed and cried
	I've had my fill, ***my*** share of ***losing***	***Ah've*** had my fill, ***mah*** share of ***losing***	***Ah've*** had my fill, ***mah*** share of ***losin'***
	I find it all so ***amusing***	***Ah*** find it all so ***amusing***	***Ah*** (aspirated) find it all so ***amusin'***
	To think **I** did all that	To think **Ah** did all that	To think **Ah** did all that
	And may ***I*** say	And may ***I*** say	And may ***I*** say
	I did it ***maaiiiiii way***	***I*** did it ***maaaaaah-i way***	***I*** did it ***maaiiiiii way***
C2	The record shows ***I*** took the blows and did it	The record shows ***Ah*** took the blows and did it	The record shows ***I*** took the blows and ***I*** did it
	And did it ***maaaaaah-i*** way	And did it ***maaaaaah-i*** way	And ***I*** did it ***maaaaiiii*** way
	The record shows ***I*** took the blows and did it	The record shows ***Ah*** took the blows and did it	The record shows ***I*** took the blows and **I** did it
	I did it ***maaaaaah-i*** way	***I*** did it ***maaaaaah-i*** way	***I*** did it ***maaaaaah-i*** way

The focus here is on three elements of dialect that vary between Southern and Northern ways of speaking: vowel shifted "I"s to "Ah"s as in "And so Ah face," dropped Rs as in "the final cuhtain," and dropped Gs in gerunds as in "losin'."[10] In broad strokes, the table shows that Vegas and Presley share the most instances of these dialect elements, nineteen in total. This is followed fairly closely by the number of dialect instances Vegas shares with Sinatra, fourteen in total. Presley and Sinatra share a mere seven instances, and there are only two of all three being in agreement.In terms of pronunciation, therefore, it is clear that the Johnny Vegas version of "My Way" acts the link between the other two songs, drawing on elements from each in similar measure.

The most prevalent element of dialect shared between Presley and Vegas is the long "I" vowel shift to "Ah," and it is, in fact, the most frequently used element shared between any two performers. Vegas, interestingly, uses this vowel shift *more* than Presley. Taken with Vegas's dropped Rs and Gs, which Presley does not use, perhaps Vegas is overdoing the interpretation to ensure that he is clearly communicating his vocal persona. In keeping with the observation made above that Vegas balances pronunciations from both Presley and Sinatra in his version of "My Way," the next most frequent element of dialect is the vowel-shifted I's counterpart in standard English, I (ai). This version of the pronoun occurs consistently in the refrain on the words "my way" in both verse and chorus, as well as in some of the immediate build-ups to these moments. At critical moments of the song, Vegas's performance is more closely aligned with Sinatra. Inherent in this is a tantalizing

[10] This issue of the long "I" was specifically addressed in phonology the very year Presley was born by Medford Evans, "Southern 'Long I,'" *American Speech* 10, no. 3 (October 1, 1935): 188, 190 and is shown to be still considered true today in websites describing the southern US dialect, for instance "Tawkin' Suthern: How to Speak with a Southern Accent" on http://www.asiteaboutnothing.net/w_southern.html, accessed 18 February 2015, which has field recordings of all three dialect elements.

ambiguity. Since Ottawans share the same pronunciation of phoneme I (ai) with Sinatra, it is unclear if Vegas is actually moving the interpretation of the Sinatra version, or if it is a case of MacDonald's persona coming through in the performance. MacDonald has said that, in order to make the song work for him, he frequently thinks of how it relates to his life as he sings it. He particularly points out the line, "I've loved, I've laughed and cried, I've had my fill, my share of losing" as a moment he reflects on past relationships, missteps, and regrets from his own life. Though that passage uses the Southern I (ah), and therefore does not make a clear correlation between MacDonald's thoughts and Vegas's performance, it is tempting to consider that when the time comes to say he did it his way, the "I" he uses refers to himself, Sinatra, or perhaps both at once.

Just like dialect, physical presentation and body language are also sites in which MacDonald balances between Presley and Sinatra's performance styles. Johnny Vegas always appears in a suit. Though occasionally this is a simple dark tuxedo, similar to the kinds that were the mainstay of Sinatra's wardrobe, the performance I recorded, and most of the press photos on his website show him in

Fig. 14 – Johnny Vegas's glitzier eveningwear

glitzier apparel (See Figure 14—not pictured is his gold lamé tuxedo). This, too is a liminal space between Sinatra and Presley: the former's formalwear meets the sequins and campy excess of the latter's concert attire of the 1970s. Presley is also reflected in Vegas's assortment of gaudy rings, of which he rarely wears less than five or six at a time. The sunglasses, however, stand out as a personal touch. Never worn by either Sinatra or Presley during concerts, MacDonald describes these as a kind of mask that helps the Johnny Vegas character to come to life. Ever pragmatic, MacDonald says that the initial reason for them was to enable him to close his eyes and avoid visual distraction while he was singing but still look as if he is visually engaging his audience. He is explicit about their role, saying that "the glasses were really the whole Johnny Vegas character; I put them on, I'm Johnny Vegas, I take them off, J. P. MacDonald." In discussing how recent gigs with the Stan Clark Big Band in Ottawa have prompted him to want to be taken more seriously as an artist, use an arrangement more like Sinatra's, and thus remove the glasses, he jokes that, luckily, he has blue eyes. This detail, a serendipitous but not insignificant physical resemblance to a feature for which Sinatra was famous, has remained concealed as a matter of course until he decided to move away from the act, and re-engage with "Ol' Blue Eyes."

The embodied nature of Johnny Vegas's performance, particularly his enactment of performative gestures, is another site where he combines Sinatra and Presley to create a singular performance style. Although Vegas's pronunciation of words changes back and forth between versions, his body language derives, for the most part, from the world of Frank Sinatra. Unlike Sid Vicious, all three performers use a handheld microphone when performing this song, and none of them moves around the stage more than a few steps from a central point. Far from being semiotically empty, these understated performances

are coloured by hand movements so interleaved with verbal expression they are called "co-speech gestures" in cognitive neuroscience.[11] Sinatra and Vegas, by far, use many more of these gestures than does Presley. Just like Sid Vicious, they use acts that mime real world action (iconic extrinsic acts), but they also gestures that have meaning only through social convention (arbitrary extrinsic acts), and actions that are themselves a message (intrinsic).[12]

Of these, the most common, and the ones on which both Sinatra and Vegas have the most agreement, are arbitrary extrinsic acts. These gestures, just like most words, are understood through repetition as cultural norms and have nothing about them that homologically refers to the meaning of the action (unlike miming). They include hand gestures with the palm up and gestures with the palm down. Figure 6 shows representative samples of each type of hand movement for both singers. Though not always used in the same part of the song, these gestures are used consistently to underscore the same kinds of lyrics. The two performers use palm down gestures to indicate assertions of fact that connote a certain level of competence and confidence ("I planned," "Too few (regrets) to mention," and "I've lived (a life that's full)"). Palm up gestures, on the other hand, are used in the *same* contexts by both singers, though the nature of these contexts varies somewhat. In "(And so I face) the final curtain," the gesture connotes a sense of acquiescence to the inevitable, a kind of manual shrug that at once acknowledges that which is coming but accepts it with equanimity.

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[11] These gestures have unambiguous meaning only in relation to speech and have are summarized in Asli Özyürek et al., "On-Line Integration of Semantic Information from Speech and Gesture: Insights from Event-Related Brain Potentials," *Journal of Coginitive Neuroscience* 19, no. 4 (2007): 606.

[12] Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen, "The Repertoire of Nonverbal Behavior: Categories, Origins, Usage, and Coding," in *Nonverbal Communication, Interaction, and Gesture: Selections from SEMIOTICA*, ed. Adam Kendon, Thomas A. Sebeok, and Jean Umiker-Sebeok (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1981), 68-69.

Fig. 15 – Sinatra's and Vegas's arbitrary extrinsically coded hand gestures[13]

a) Palm down

"Too few to mention"


"I planned each charted course"


"I've lived [a life that's full]"

b) Palm up


"(And so I face) The final curtain"


"(And so I face) The final curtain"

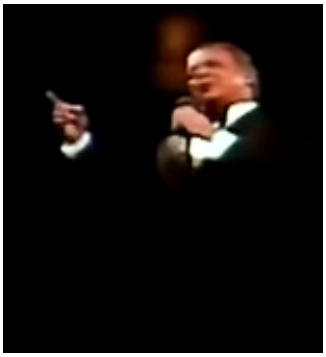

"(What is a man?) What has he got?"


"(What is a man?) What has he got?"

[13] All Sinatra images were screen captured from his 1974 Madison Square Garden performance of "My Way," one of his most iconic performances. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85_YK-La0vk, accessed 19 February 2015.

Fig. 16 – Sinatra's pointing and Vegas's palm-down assertions

"(I ate it up) And spit it out"



"(If not himself)
Then he has not"

"If not himself
(then he has not)"

In "(What is a man?) What has he got?" the gestures convey both the open-ended nature, the breadth of the question, and perhaps a trace of the manual shrug in the face of such an imponderable. Sinatra and Vegas diverge in their respective use of pointing. An intrinsic act, this gesture means what it is: the identification of a person, place, or object. Figure 16 shows Sinatra's use of pointing and compares it to Vegas's performance of the same verses.

It is clear that Sinatra uses pointing in contexts of assertion similar to the use of the palm-down hand gesture. By designating someone specific (even if imaginary), however, the effect of pointing raises the intensity of the assertiveness from declaring something is true to *telling someone* something is true. In the case of "If not himself," the intensity is also increased when Sinatra points to his chest, making what could be construed as a personal statement about the song. Vegas, however, chooses to use less assertive palm-down and palm-up gestures in the examples above. This reflects the different venue in which he is performs (a bar where people are out for an evening of light fun, not a lecture), but also enables him to save pointing for another purpose.

When Sinatra points, he draws on a shared understanding of what his pointing means: he is telling you something in no uncertain terms. Johnny Vegas, on the other hand, uses pointing as a pose, one that he also uses in promotional and media photos (see Figure 17). In this sense, his use of it is idiosyncratic. The pointing does not convey anything: it is part of a pose which itself only conveys an overall impression, not a specific message.[14] The pose, however, is iconic. It conveys the concept of "Johnny Vegas" to those who have seen his representations in the media. He uses it, just like the standard English "I" sound, to punctuate almost every refrain of "My Way" (see Figure 18). Vegas points only in two other cases during the recording, when singing "and may I say (not in a shy way)" and "but then again, (too few to mention)." In both instances his hands are either very low or rotated to an almost palms-up position, and do not resemble the pose. Thus his use of pointing as part of the "Johnny Vegas" pose occurs at the same time he slips back into his native pronunciation of "I" when he tells us he did it his way.

[14] Ekman and Friesen, "The Repertoire of Nonverbal Behavior: Categories, Origins, Usage, and Coding," 56, 62–63.

Fig. 17 – The Johnny Vegas pose[15]

Fig. 18 – "My way" in Verse 1, Verse 2, Chorus 1, and Verse 3, respectively

[15] Images include the banner from Vegas's website www.jvegas.com, a 15 January 2013 article in *Ottawa Life Magazine* http://www.ottawalife.com/2013/01/the-johnny-vegas-interview-shakin-not-stirred/ and an article from the *Ottawa Sun* on 12 November 1999, all accessed from www.jvegas.com on 19 February 2015.

The refrain of the final chorus is the only one Vegas performs differently, and is the only moment he draws from Presley's gestural vocabulary rather than Sinatra's. Presley, for his part, moves very little in his live performances of the song, keeping his right hand firmly anchored on the microphone cable. The moment they converge involves not just a hand gesture, but an entire body shift 90 degrees that facilitates the final cut off to the band (Figure 19). What is important is not so much the poses each performer strikes, but the purpose of the movement: to signal the end of the song and tell the band to stop playing.

Fig. 19 – Presley and Vegas final "My way" cut-offs in Chorus 2[16]

The action could be accomplished by another musician, as is the case with Sinatra's performances, but it was not in these cases because it serves another purpose. In describing how he relates to "My Way," MacDonald said that it was also a song about him as a bandleader, a song through which he would sometimes work out frustrations he had

[16] This Presley still was taken from the video of the immensely popular and enduring *Aloha From Hawaii* concert on 14 January 1973, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URD0kzXtLAs accessed 19 February 2015.

when disagreements arose with the other musicians. By taking the final cut-off into his own hands, he, just like the King, reminds everyone who is in charge, and who's way the song represents.

Sound Structures

Similar to the negotiation of homologies between Vegas's "My Way" and Presley's and Sinatra's in the form of venue, attire, pronunciation, and body language, we also find a similar negotiation by Vegas in the realm of sound structures. Table 6 provides an inventory of all of the harmonic differences between the three versions. The most readily discernible feature is that, unlike his pronunciations or his vocal rhythms—which I will discuss later—Vegas forgoes carefully balancing his interpretation between Presley and Sinatra and follows the former more closely. This is unsurprising, since Kiesewalter's arrangement is based on this version, and since neither he nor MacDonald knew that there were significant differences between it and Sinatra's base song. The other clear observation to report is that none of the harmonic changes fundamentally alter the musical syntax. Certain chords are prolonged in some versions, shortened in others, some are inverted or substituted for different harmonies, but the overall function (T, PD, or D) of a chord is never contested or altered. Unlike the Sid Vicious version, there is no breakdown of formal markers; these versions, from a large-scale structural point of view, all work the same way.

Changes at the surface level of music, however, are not always merely cosmetic. When taken in combination with lyrics, or when they alter established tropes, even small changes can become musically marked, especially in a situation of great similarity between

versions, as is the case of isomorphic covers. Of the changes in Table 6, the ones in orange are changes Vegas made that are not represented in either the Sinatra or Presley versions.

Table 6 — Summary of Harmonic Changes Between Sinatra, Presley, and Vegas
Colours denote similarities between versions, or in the case of orange, where Vegas's interpretation differs from both Sinatra and Presley.

Section	Lyrics	Elvis	Vegas	Sinatra
Verses (Only lyrics for V1 are used)	My Friend, I'll say it clear/I'll state my case of which I'm certain	**II – ♭II⁺ – IV⁶₄ – V⁶ – V**	**II – ♭II⁺ – I⁶₄ – V⁶₅**	II – II⁴₂ – V⁶₅ – (V)
	...a life that's full, I've travel'd each	I – I⁶ – IV	I – I⁶ – IV	I – IV
	...and ev'ry highway	IV – IV♭/♭$\hat{7}$	IV – IV♭	IV – II⁷
	...more, much more than this	I – V	V⁶₄-⁵₃	V⁶₄-⁵₃
	...I did it, my way	V⁷ – II⁶₅ – II – I	V⁷ – II⁷ – I	V⁷ – II⁷/Î – I
Chorus 1	And through it all/when there was doubt	**II⁷ – II⁴₂ – V⁶ – V**	**II⁷ – II⁴₂ – V⁶ – V**	II⁷ – II⁶₅ – V
	(I stood) tall and did it	V⁷	V⁶₅ – V⁷	V⁷
	...I did it, my way	V⁷ – II⁶₅ – I	V⁷ – II⁶₅ – I	V⁷ – II⁷/Î – I
Chorus 2	...words he truly feels	II⁷ – II⁴₃ – V	**II⁷ – II⁴₂ – V⁶ – V**	II⁷ – V
	...words of one who kneels	III⁷ – V⁶₅/VI – VI⁷	III⁷ – VI⁷	III⁷ – VI⁷
	(of one who) kneels/ The record shows	VI⁷ – II⁷	VI⁷ – II⁷	VI⁷ – V⁶₅/II – II⁷
	(I took the) blows/ And did it	V⁷	V⁶₅ – V⁷	V⁷
	(my) way/ The record shows	I	I – I⁶	N/A
Ending	...I did it, my way	V⁷ – II⁶₅ – I	V⁷ – II⁶₅ – I	V⁷ – II⁷/Î – I – instrumental interlude V⁷ – II⁷/Î
Ending (Sinatra Live Versions)[17]	...I did it, my way	N/A	N/A	V⁷ – II⁷/Î – I – V⁷/IV – IV – I

[17] Sinatra consistently performed "My Way" without the final instrumental interlude from the recording, but with a new, shorter plagal ending in his live performances. See London (1971) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kl4Uh5nOFAg, Madison Square Garden (1974) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85_YK-La0vk, and also in undated videos from later in his career such as https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcJjL03Hdw0 and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnXIPV6Jh4Y, all accessed 25 February 2015.

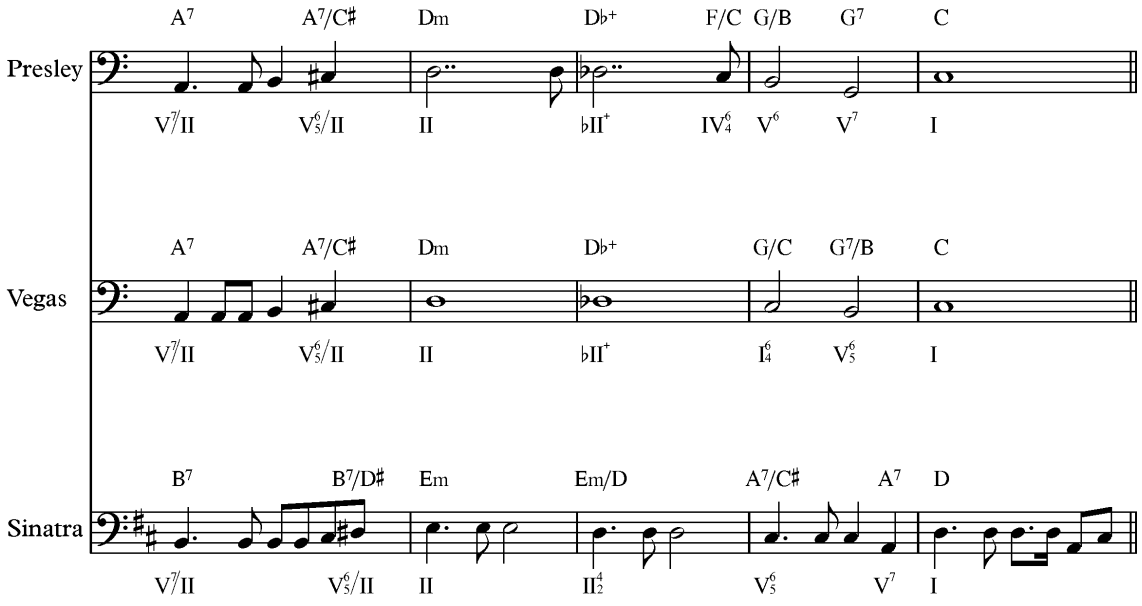
Each instance falls into one of two categories. Either an inversion is added (as in the examples from Chorus 1 and 2) or removed (as in the verses). On their own, such changes are minimal, but in each case marked in orange, the change happens at or immediately before Vegas sings the words "my way." Not only are these changes tied to an important moment in the narrative, the refrain, but Vegas decides to use other markers to assert his identity at the same time: he ceases the vowel-shifted Southern "I"s in favour of his native pronunciation, and he strikes the iconic "Johnny Vegas" pose. These moments illustrate Feld's point from the outset of this chapter that musically important moments are socially marked. In this case, an important moment in the lyrics is marked by interpretive decisions that differentiate Vegas's version from the others.

More strongly articulated surface musical changes in some way alter the tropes presented in Chapter 2 (bold entries in Table 6). Given the isomorphic nature of Vegas's cover, however, most tropes remain unaffected. Only two undergo some kind of variation: the descending bass lines of lament and the anacrusis climaxes. The former results in more important structural changes than were present in the syntactical alterations above. Vegas's version does not fundamentally change the meanings of the tropes. It does, however, change their flavour and further exemplifies the specificity of this version as Johnny Vegas's.

The chromatic descent, as we have previously seen, is a potent trope with a long history in Western music as a marker of lamentation, sadness, and death. It is one of the tropes that the Sid Vicious version attacks by making it an inner voice over a pedal harmony, thus simplifying it and draining it of its significance by reducing it to an ornamental gesture. The Presley and Vegas versions do what is, in some senses, the

opposite: the trope continues to be structurally important and is even extended (see Example 27). Up until the V7/II, all versions match chord-for-chord, but there the similarity ends. As we saw in Chapter 2, the Sinatra version proceeds directly to another trope, the diatonic descending bass lines of consolation that support the more hopeful lyrics with which they coincide. The Presley and Vegas versions instead prolong the chromatic descent and move through a dissonant augmented ♭II toward V. Vegas's version is more dissonant than Presley's, since his arrival on C is as an accented half-note passing second inversion chord, whereas in Presley's version this type of chord is on the last eighth note of the bar.

Ex. 27 — Comparison of chromatic descending bass lines in Presley/Vegas and Sinatra



It is interesting to note that Presley's version did not include this fully supported chromatic bass line until late in his career, when his health was in decline.[18] The recording that Vegas used for his arrangement was made during a 1977 appearance in Rapid City, SD, during a

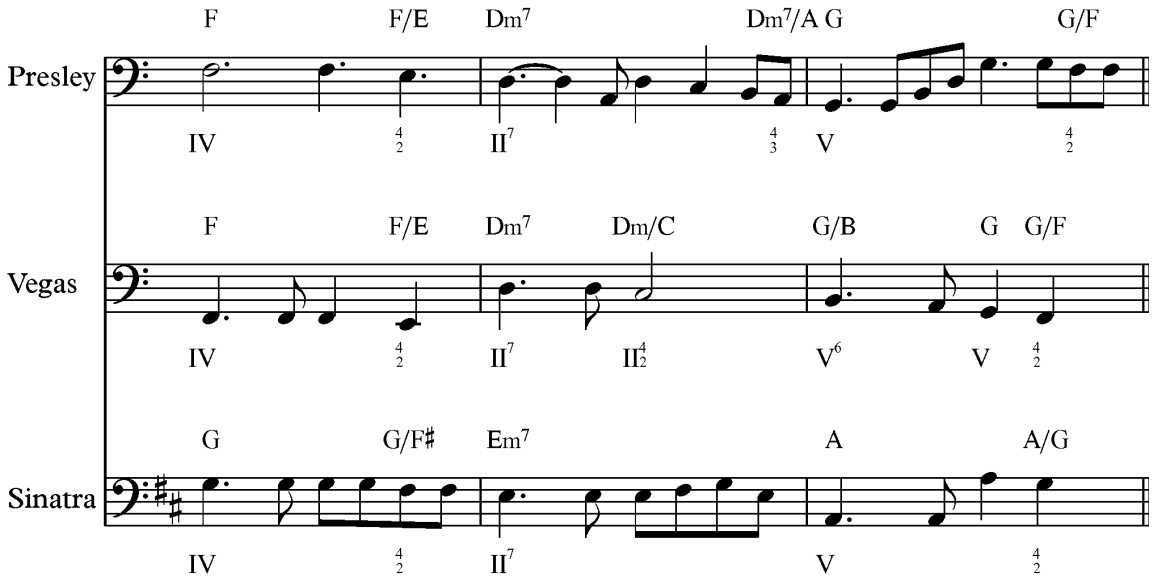
[18] Neither the 12 January rehearsal concert, nor the 14 January live telecast of *Aloha From Hawaii* in 1973 feature this disposition. There is, in both cases a brief C-sharp passing tone but it is unsupported and quickly dismissed. See the 12 January rehearsal at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2bZp0MMLNU (this part includes "My Way"), and 14 January at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IuS75UZmnbs (this is the whole concert), both accessed 25 February 2015.

time that Presley biographer Peter Guralnick describes that "there was no longer any pretense of keeping up appearances. The idea was simply to get Elvis out onstage and keep him upright for the hour he was scheduled to perform."[19] Regardless of whether or not this change was consciously intended to convey the end in the same manner Presley had done a few months earlier when he changed the words to "Can't Help Falling in Love" to "Wise men know/When it's time to go…," it remains that the chromatic descending bass colours lyrics such as "I'll state my case of which I'm certain" more darkly.[20] In this sense, just as with the way he overdid the Southern pronunciation as we saw earlier, Vegas's version can be seen as overstating the trope by making it more dissonant than in Presley's. It is not the case that the character is more tormented, but rather that he is exaggerating for effect.

The diatonic descent, however, is not entirely forsaken. It does reappear in the choruses, both versions using it to set the words "(But through it) all/When there was doubt (I ate it up and spit it out)" (see Example 28). Here, the passage that simply moves from II^7 to V^7 in Sinatra progresses in the same manner as the lost diatonic bass line of the verses (II^7-$II^4{}_2$-$V^6{}_5$-V^7). Vegas's version uses the formula again in Chorus 2 to set the words, "(To say the) things/He truly feels (And not the words of one who kneels)." Though the lyrics in both moments can be read as consoling, in Chorus 2, only Vegas's version uses the trope. This is another instance, like his sudden change of body language, in which Vegas's version marks Chorus 2. As we shall see, the marking of this section is a feature of all three versions, albeit in differing ways, and connects with the only other modified trope, the anacrusis climax.

[19] Peter Guralnick, *Careless Love: The Unmaking of Elvis Presley* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1999), 634.
[20] The performance of "Can't Help Falling In Love With You" was in Alexandria, LA, in March 1977, Ibid., 628.

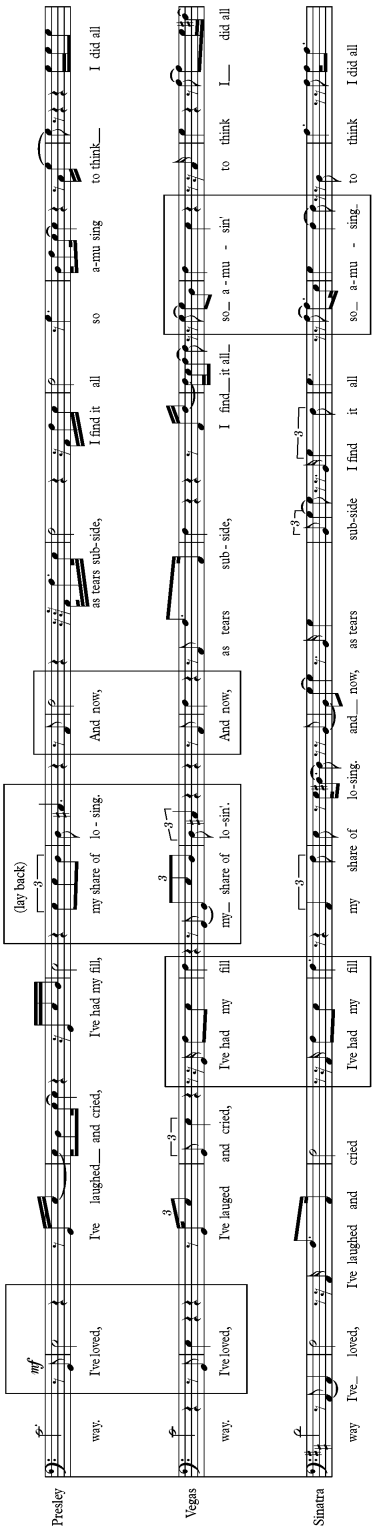
Ex. 28 — Displacement of diatonic bass lines in Presley and Vegas's versions



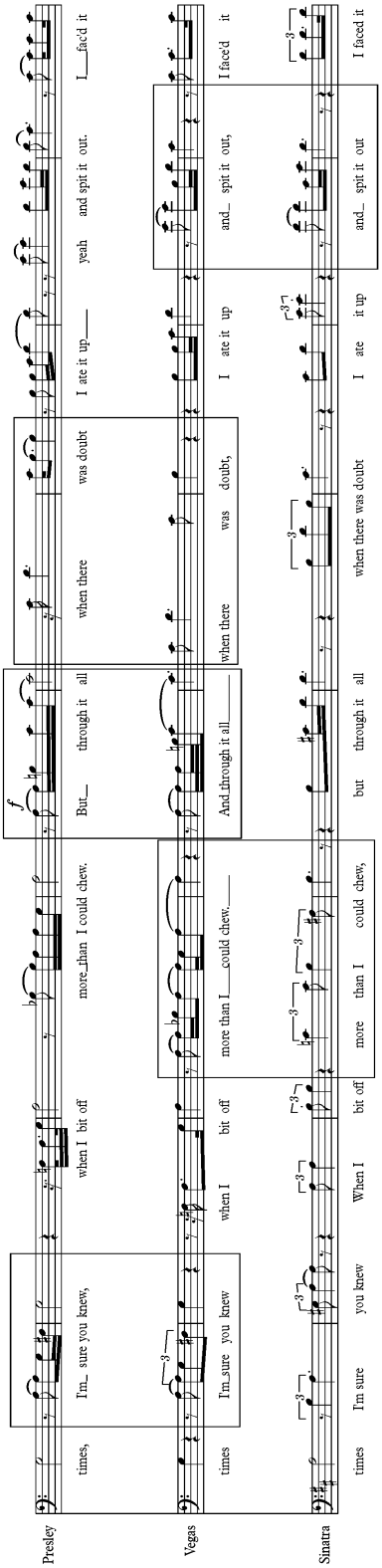
The changes in the anacrusis climax, other than diatonic bass trope above, concern Vegas's use of vocal rhythms. To understand the meaning of Vegas's performance in Chorus 2, however, we must first understand how he uses vocal rhythm throughout his cover. Excluding the final chorus, Vegas borrows the rhythms he sings in almost equal measure from Sinatra and Presley. Example 29 presents two representative passages, the first from Verse 3, the second from Chorus 1. In both cases, rhythmic isomorphisms between Vegas's performance and those of Sinatra and Presley are distributed fairly evenly, three with Presley and two with Sinatra in each section. The numbers vary depending on the exact place one looks, but overall these pages are representative of the distribution. Thus, pockets of Vegas's own rhythms are interspersed with vocal rhythms he adapts or copies from the other two. This holds true for every section until Chorus 2. In this, the final chorus of the song, the 12/8 repeated chord pulse that shifts the genre to 1950s pop in Presley's version, unexpectedly brings his three-note anacruses into alignment with Sinatra's triplets.

Ex. 29 – Comparison of vocal rhythms in Verse 1 and Chorus 1
(boxes represent isomorphisms between versions)

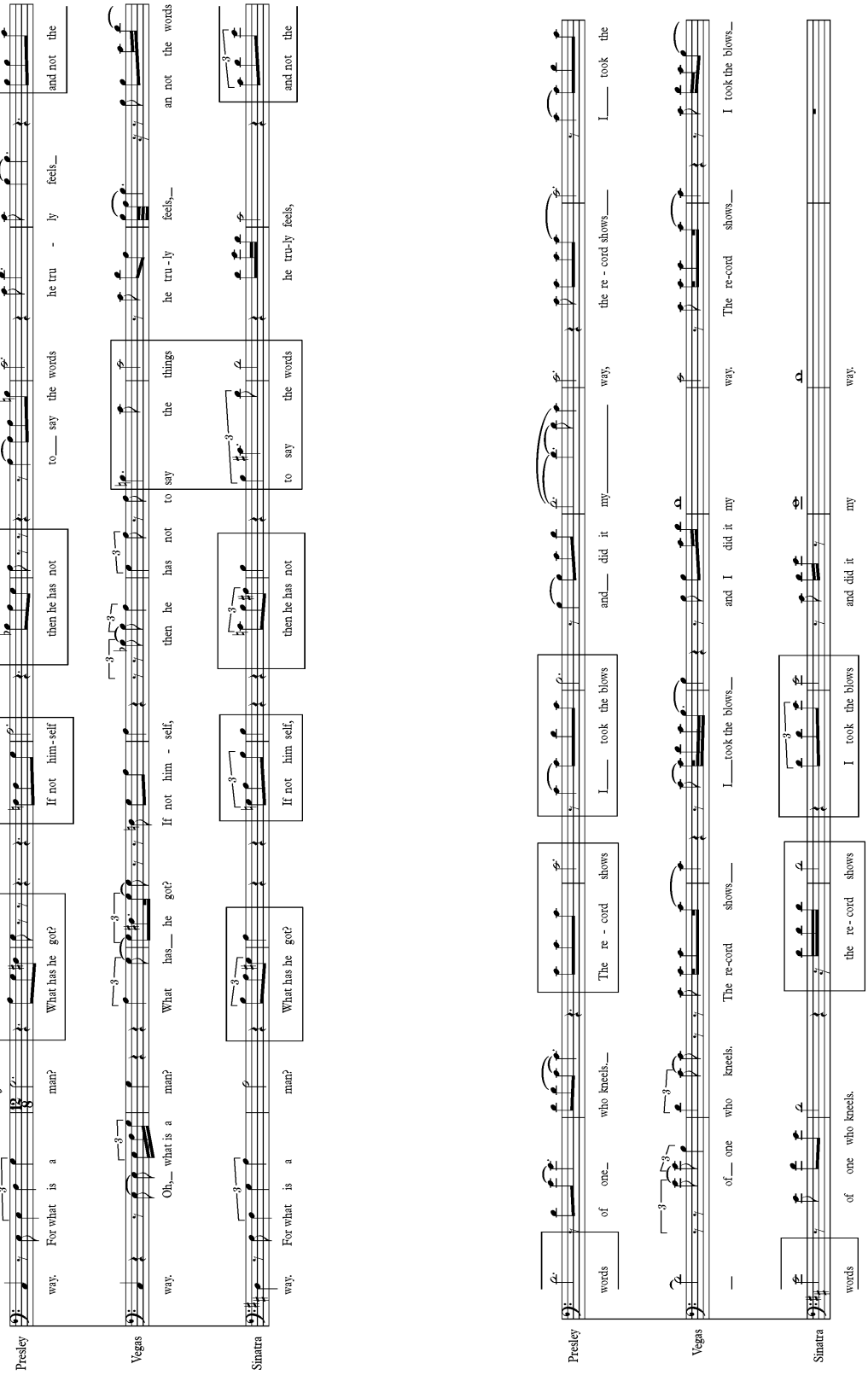
a) Verse 1



b) Chorus 1



Ex. 30 — Comparison of vocal rhythms Chorus 2
(boxes represent isomorphisms between versions)



As Example 30 shows, however, any rhythmic isomorphisms with Vegas are now almost completely absent.

The final chorus of "My Way" is a site of the greatest amount of individuality in each of the three versions. With Sinatra, the change is primarily in orchestration. Trumpets and trombones punctuate each line with fanfare motives, the strings play a counter-melody that reaches up to E7, the highest note of any instrument in the piece, and the horns and flutes create a chromatic backdrop to it all that intensifies the contrapuntal density. While Presley's version does not reach the level of Don Costa's orchestrational flair, it does add instruments and more frequent choral backing to thicken the ending, but these are not the centerpieces of the finale. That is reserved for a shift in genre from a Sinatra-esque ballad to an up-tempo 1950s-style pop song in 12/8 that acts as a synecdoche for Presley's oeuvre.[21] Because of its iconicity, this is Presley's most potent interpretive tactic. He incontrovertibly puts his mark on Chorus 2 and, thus, pulls away from the Sinatra version. Though Presley's version is still isomorphic overall, this ending positions it closer to the middle of the continuum. Although MacDonald says that, on occasion, he did play the 12/8, this was a rare event and it is one that to which I was never a party. Regardless, this would not have been a tactic, but a performance decision that would cause his version to become *more* isomorphic with Presley's and dispel much of the Sinatra-Presley ambiguity that is central to his later career. Vegas therefore has a vested interest in avoiding the 12/8 and instead finding some other way of making his mark on the climax of the song, a mark that

[21] For instance, the next song Presley sings after "My Way" on the *Aloha From Hawaii* recordings is "Love Me," also a 1950s pop tune in 12/8. For more on genre synecdoches see Philip Tagg and Robert Clarida, *Ten Little Title Tunes: Towards a Musicology of the Mass Media* (New York: Mass Media Music Scholars' Press, 2003), 101.

refrains from idiosyncrasy so as to not alienatee his public's expectations for Presley or Sinatra cover.

Vegas's solution is to use his own vocal rhythms. Whereas Presley and Sinatra's singing becomes rhythmically clearer in the final chorus, Vegas's becomes more complex, with many uneven syncopations ("The record shows"), displacement dissonances ("I took the blows"), and triplet hemiolas ("What has he got?") (see Ex. 30). Without altering any pitches, unlike Presley, Vegas raises the tension by pushing against rhythmic expectation. Instead of an anacrusis climax that has a well-defined profile and whose triplets are representative of struggle, tension in Vegas's is heightened by the sudden uncertainty as to where his anacruses will fall. This is a different kind of struggle, one meant to resist influence, to make the song his own without the audience losing a sense of connection to the originals. By changing the vocal rhythms without affecting the melodic pitches, Vegas performs in his own fashion a cover that the audience will readily recognize as "My Way."

CHAPTER 5

Expanding the Cover Song Continuum:
Isomorphic and Metamorphic Tactics, Strategy Chains, Evolving Contexts

> "…there remains an endless expanse of musical territory to uncover.
> The stereophonic act persists. Sibling songs, duets repeating in rivalry and reciprocity. Over and over. Again and again."
> –George Plasketes[1]

The Present Project

In the previous chapters, I set out to expand upon the nascent scholarship on cover songs by proposing an analytical approach that accomplishes three main goals. First, I refocused the conversation from a discussion of aesthetic objects (individual base song/cover song pairs) to a discussion of aesthetic processes (the cultural practice of cover*ing*) that can be applied broadly to many different song families. Second, I proposed a concrete method of qualitative analysis that draws from de Certeau's concept of strategies and tactics, where the former represent the musical framework created by the base song, and the latter refers to the choices made by the cover artist about preserving or changing that framework. Since covering can involve many aspects of music, I read strategies and tactics semiotically as belonging to composition and performance (poiesis), sound structure (trace), or reception (esthesis), according to an adapted version of Nattiez's

[1] George Plasketes, ed., *Play It Again: Cover Songs in Popular Music* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 7.

and Molino's tripartition. Third, I offer a conceptual framework for the quantitative interpretation of qualitative observations about strategies and tactics, which I call the "cover song continuum." This continuum, presented as a hyperbolic curve, is a conceptual guide, not a formal mathematical process for mapping the number and extent of creative decisions to be similar or different. It represents what are, essentially, fuzzy categories: isomorphic covers, whose interpretations tend toward similarity with the original but which always contain some amount of difference; metamorphic covers, whose interpretations tend toward difference but always contain some measure of similarity; and derivatives, interpretations that preserve as much as they change.

The cover song continuum ties together the analytical method and the conception of covering as practice that I propose into an overall framework. It disambiguates what we mean by the term "covering," demonstrates that the practice is animated by different intentions and gives us the means to analyze those intentions specifically. As I have said previously, I intend this approach to represent the start of a broader and more focused conversation about covering and reproduction. I therefore conceive of this dissertation as the first iteration of many versions of my approach, each of which will refine and improve on the last. Naturally, its functioning can and should be improved, new ideas could be incorporated into its fold, and different analytical directions could be pursued. What follows are a few sketches of possible directions for this research in the coming years.

Future Directions

One issue that arose during analysis was the possibility of applying the isomorphic/metamorphic labels to individual tactics. Over the course of Chapters 2-4, I

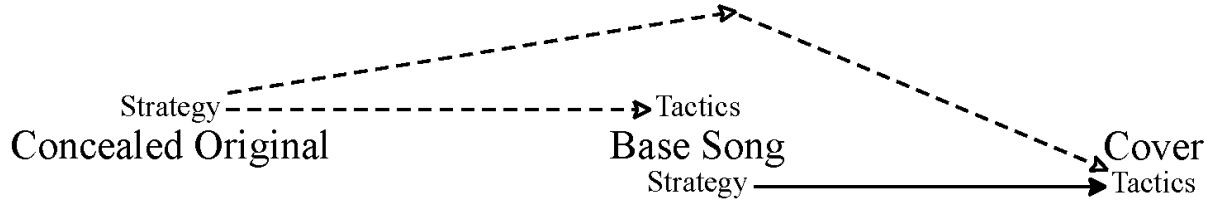
have presented clear exemplars of each category of covering. If we plot these exemplars on the continuum, maybe Johnny Vegas's cover would be high on the isomorphic asymptote of the curve; Presley's would be not far behind; meanwhile Vicious's would be at the further end of the metamorphic asymptote; François would be on a different graph since his is a different song. There are probably many covers, maybe even a majority, that fall closer to the middle of the curve and are not strongly pulled either way, but which are also not derivatives. In such cases there may be too few tactics to make a solid argument for a song being strongly on one side or the other. It is here that a discussion of the individual tactics as isomorphic or metamorphic becomes useful.

Take, for instance, a punk cover of a show tune like "Don't Cry For Me Argentina" by Me First and the Gimme Gimmes. Other than changing the genre from Andrew Lloyd Webber's brand of pop showtune to 1990s punk, everything about the song is basically preserved. It is unclear whether the genre shift, which is an admittedly extensive change, is enough to make this a metamorphic cover when the rest of the song is otherwise isomorphic. The analysis would turn away from the unrevealing nature of the cover's marginal embodiment of similarity or difference and focus, instead, on which parts of the song embody which aspect of the continuum. Such analyses could reveal meanings in how cover artists decided to change only certain aspects while remaining faithful to others. Perhaps, from such observations, a taxonomy of typical tactics could be assembled, enabling analysts to compare covering methods by different artists across songs, genres, and even cultures to see where there are similarities and differences. This would require a lot of preliminary work, but it is nevertheless fascinating to consider the potential of comparing covering practices through their typical tactics, an analytical investigation that

could lead to broader understanding of how reproduction works in various cultures and subcultures around the world.

It is also possible that the need for other or more nuanced categories of cover songs may emerge through further use of the system. One such potential category is a "concealed original," a situation that arises when a performer who covers a song is unaware that their base song is itself a cover. This can be illustrated by the case of "Try A Little Tenderness," which has been covered by some performers who might be unaware that Bing Crosby is the originator of the song. In cases like these, the first cover by Otis Redding becomes the strategy for the second. Analyses would be conducted in series, starting with the most obviously pertinent pairing, but thereafter they would examine the covert relationship between the chronological original (Crosby) and the first cover (Redding).

Fig. 20 – "Concealed Cover" influence diagram

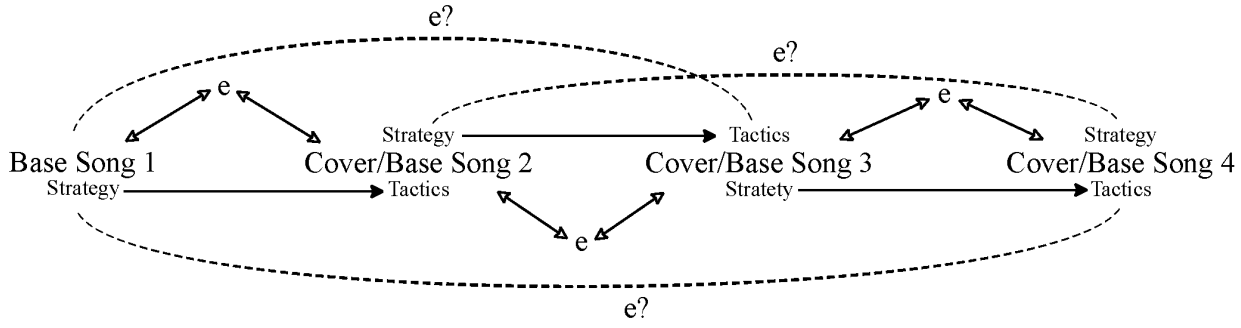


Since the strategies are linked in a transmission chain, there would likely be elements of the original's strategies transmitted to the second cover via the first.

A situation related to "concealed originals" are long "strategy chains." Jocelyn Neal (2009) describes an example of this practice in reference to a set of Jimmie Rodgers songs that are appropriated by a number of different artists in series, and modified lyrically and

musically with each new incarnation until their relation to the source is no longer recognizable.[2]

Fig. 21 – "Strategy Chain" influence diagram



Although each cover in Figure 21 is initially a use of tactics, each becomes a base song (and therefore a strategy) in its own right as it becomes the point of reference for the next cover, and so on. This is not unlike "concealed covers" in that the song two steps earlier is obscured somewhat, or totally, by the immediately preceding song. It is different, however, in that there still might be some form of the esthesic at work (the "e?"), just as we saw with Johnny Vegas's relationship to versions by Elvis Presley, and Frank Sinatra. Figure 21 shows how an analyst might trace the musical DNA of a song through its various reinterpretations and argue for how far the web of influence of a given song actually extends, which signifiers are maintained or changed, and what expressive purpose these decisions serve. It would also allow for comparative analyses between any two songs in the chain, or all of them at once.

[2] Jocelyn R. Neal, *The Songs of Jimmie Rodgers: A Legacy in Country Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 15.

Evolving Contexts

For my case studies I have chosen to analyze only a single family of songs. Such a narrow sample allowed me to focus as clearly and in as much detail as possible on the manner in which the analytical approach functions. The case studies have been chosen because they represent very different approaches to covering. That these songs ultimately helped me to identify the concept of isomorphic, metamorphic, and derivative categories, however, does not limit my system to the description of a single set of songs. This is why, from the start, I have framed my system as an analysis of practice, not objects. The most important work going forward is to demonstrate how my framework can apply to any covers made since 1960, when, according to Michael Coyle (2002), modern covering began in earnest.[3] To examine Euro-American musical repurposing over the last 55 years is to look into the heart of a period of great social and political upheaval that will necessarily bring many different epistemological perspectives into the analytical task that were not present in the constrained sample of my case studies. How covers interact with and cross the lines of gender, race, class, sexuality, and culture are all incontrovertible realities that need to be addressed. They also stand to open many new doors by nuancing how tactics work in intersectional frames of reference, how strategies and tactics can be racialized, gendered, sexualized, and classed. If we accept Coyle's assertion that modern covering practices began in the late 1950s, then that places the birth of the practices around the same time as the beginning of the jet age and, thus, the massive acceleration of

[3] Michael Coyle has argued that Elvis Presley's 1956 cover of Carl Perkins's "Blue Suede Shoes" is one of the first modern covers in the sense that it was culturally attributed to Presley. This contrasts with the older covering practice, which would have considered the song a Presley version of a popular tune, one among many. Michael Coyle, "Hijacked Hits and Antic Authenticity: Cover Songs, Race, and Postwar Marketing," in Roger Beebe, Denise Fulbrook, and Ben Saunders, eds., *Rock Over the Edge: Transformations in Popular Music Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 145.

globalization, which has brought cultures and their cover songs into much closer contact. Just as with issues of race, class, and gender, the manner in which different people across the world have repurposed songs from their own and other cultures as acts of defiance or submission to colonial pressure, as misreadings lost in translation, or as idealistic aspirations to construct a national identity, among other possible motivations, has the great potential for revealing important aspects of what it means to be human.

Final Word

What do we mean by "cover songs"? I close with the question that opened this dissertation because it is a measure by which we can apprehend the project's conceptual evolution. Following the discussion above, the question is clearly misleading since its sole focus is on an aesthetic object. If my work has shown anything, it is that cover songs are the end results of cultural *processes* of appropriation, repurposing, and redefinition; they are traces of social action. Thus, the question "What do we mean by 'covering'?" might seem more appropriate, but it, too, is inadequate. Although it does value process over object, it does not recognize all processes. Derivation, which I deem to be an important part of the reinterpretation of songs in Europe and North America since the mid-20th century, is left out. Since beginning this project, I have searched for a word that could be applied to the practices of covering and derivation, that would somehow capture the essence of these kinds of reinterpretation without stripping them of their individual essences. Perhaps the most promising word through which to conceive of covering and derivation is "reinscription," borrowed from cultural studies and which refers to the reestablishment of

a song in a new context.[4] The concept is specific enough to connote the reworking of material central to both covering and derivation, but general enough to avoid the exclusion of one concept or the other on grounds of what material they rework and how they do it. In fact, "reinscription" also brings into the discussion the re-performance of standards, which is another related cultural process that, while it shares some features with covering and derivation, is nevertheless quite different. Reinscription can, therefore, be thought of as a family of practices that reinterpret different elements of a song: derivation reinscribes only music, the performance of standards reinscribes music and lyrics, and covering reinscribes music, lyrics, and performance. This frame is vast and offers possibilities for further reflection on the act of song repurposing that far outstrips the capacities of any one analyst. If this project has done anything, it is to open a door and witness the inexhaustible expanse on the other side. Without a doubt, songs will continue to be retransmitted, re-performed, reshaped, reused, and remade. Without a doubt we will re-listen, re-digest, rethink, relearn, and re-analyze them again and again, over and over.

[4] Although probably lesser known in music theory, "reinscription" is a very common term in cultural studies and figures prominently in works by Michel Foucault, Mikhail Bakhtin, Homi Bhabha, Judith Butler and many others. Canadian cultural theorist Shaobo Xie has described it as a "negotiation into the present" of something from the past. Shaobo Xie, "Rememory, Reinscription, Resignification: Strategies of Decolonization in Chinese Canadian Literature," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 33, no. 3–4 (December 2006): 352.

Appendix

Sinatra and François song samples used for interobjective comparison in Chapter 2

Since many of my sources were compilations, the years listed are for the original releases to give the reader a view of which periods of Sinatra's and François's work I was studying. For the sake of verifiability, however, I have listed the actual source of each song as I encountered it in "Album."

Sinatra

SONG	ALBUM	YEAR
1. From The Bottom Of My Heart	Harry James	1939
2. Melancholy Mood	Harry James	1939
3. My Buddy	Harry James	1939
4. It's Funny To Everyone But Me	Harry James	1939
5. Here Comes The Night	Harry James	1939
6. All Or Nothing At All	Harry James	1939
7. On A Little Street In Singapore	Harry James	1939
8. Who Told You I Cared?	Harry James	1939
9. Ciribiribin (They're So In Love)	Harry James	1939
10. Every Day Of My Life	Harry James	1939
11. Stardust	Harry James	1939
12. Wishing Will Make It So	Harry James	1939
13. If I Didn't Care	Harry James	1939
14. The Lampe Is Low	Harry James	1939
15. My Love For You	Harry James	1939
16. Moon Love (Tchaikovsky 5)	Harry James	1939
17. This Is No Dream	Harry James	1939
18. Close To You	Complete Columbia	1943
19. You'll Never Know	Complete Columbia	1943

20. Sunday, Monday, Or Always	Complete Columbia	1943
21. If You Please	Complete Columbia	1943
22. People Will Say We're In Love	Complete Columbia	1943
23. Oh, What A Beautiful Mornin'	Complete Columbia	1943
24. I Couldn't Sleep A Wink Last Night	Complete Columbia	1943
25. A Lovely Way To Spend An Evening	Complete Columbia	1943
26. The Music Stopped	Complete Columbia	1943
27. If You Are But A Dream	Complete Columbia	1944
28. Saturday Night (Is The Loneliest…)	Complete Columbia	1944
29. There's No You	Complete Columbia	1944
30. White Christmas	Complete Columbia	1944
31. I Dream Of You (More Than You…)	Complete Columbia	1944
32. I Begged Her	Complete Columbia	1944
33. What Makes The Sunset?	Complete Columbia	1944
34. I Fall In Love Too Easily	Complete Columbia	1944
35. Nancy (With The Laughing Face)	Complete Columbia	1944
36. Cradle Song	Complete Columbia	1944
37. Ol' Man River	Complete Columbia	1944
38. Stormy Weather	Complete Columbia	1944
39. The Charms Of You	Complete Columbia	1944
40. Only The Lonely	Only The Lonely	1958
41. Angel Eyes	Only The Lonely	1958
42. What's New?	Only The Lonely	1958
43. It's A Lonesome Town	Only The Lonely	1958
44. Willow Weep For Me	Only The Lonely	1958
45. Goodbye	Only The Lonely	1958
46. Blues In The Night	Only The Lonely	1958
47. Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out To Dry	Only The Lonely	1958
48. Ebb Tide	Only The Lonely	1958
49. Spring Is Here	Only The Lonely	1958
50. Gone With The Wind	Only The Lonely	1958
51. One For My Baby	Only The Lonely	1958
52. Sleep Warm	Only The Lonely	1958
53. Where Or When	Only The Lonely	1958
54. When No One Cares	No One Cares	1959
55. A Cottage For Sale	No One Cares	1959

56. Stormy Weather	No One Cares	1959
57. Where Do You Go?	No One Cares	1959
58. I Don't Stand A Ghost Of A Chance	No One Cares	1959
59. Here's That Rainy Day	No One Cares	1959
60. I Can't Get Started	No One Cares	1959
61. Why Try To Change Me Now?	No One Cares	1959
62. Just Friends	No One Cares	1959
63. I'll Never Smile Again	No One Cares	1959
64. None But The Lonely Heart	No One Cares	1959
65. The One I Love	No One Cares	1959
66. This Was My Love	No One Cares	1959
67. I Could Have Told You	No One Cares	1959
68. You Forgot All The Words	No One Cares	1959
69. In The Wee Small Hours	In The Wee Small Hours	1955
70. Mood Indigo	In The Wee Small Hours	1955
71. Glad To Be Unhappy	In The Wee Small Hours	1955
72. I Get Along Without You Very Well	In The Wee Small Hours	1955
73. Deep In A Dream	In The Wee Small Hours	1955
74. I See Your Face Before Me	In The Wee Small Hours	1955
75. Can't We Be Friends?	In The Wee Small Hours	1955
76. When Your Lover Has Gone	In The Wee Small Hours	1955
77. What Is This Thing Called Love?	In The Wee Small Hours	1955
78. Last Night When We Were Young	In The Wee Small Hours	1955
79. I'll Be Around	In The Wee Small Hours	1955
80. Ill Wind	In The Wee Small Hours	1955
81. I'll Never Be The Same	In The Wee Small Hours	1955
82. This Love Of Mine	In The Wee Small Hours	1955
83. The Girl From Ipanema	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
84. Dindi	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
85. Change Partners	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
86. Quiet Nights of Quiet Stars	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
87. Meditation (Meditação)	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
88. If You Never Come To Me	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
89. How Insensitive	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
90. I Concentrate On You	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
91. Baubles, Bangles, and Beads	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69

92. Once I Loved (O Amor Em Paz)	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
93. The Song Of The Sabia	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
94. Drinking Water (Agua Di Beber)	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
95. Someone To Light Up My Life	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
96. Triste	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
97. This Happy Madness (Estrada Branca)	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
98. One Note Samba	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
99. Don't Ever Go Away	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
100. Wave	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
101. Off Key (Desafinado)	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
102. Bonita	Sinatra/Jobim: Complete	1967/69
103. I've Go The World On A String	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1953
104. Lean, Baby	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1953
105. I Love You	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1953
106. South Of The Border	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1953
107. From Here To Eternity	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1953
108. They Can't Take That Away From Me	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1954
109. I Get A Kick Out Of You	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1954
110. Young At Heart	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1954
111. Three Coins In The Fountain	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1954
112. All Of Me	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1954
113. Taking A Chance On Love	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1954
114. Someone To Watch Over Me	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1954
115. Learning The Blues	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1955
116. Our Town	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1955
117. Love And Marriage	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1955
118. (Love Is) The Tender Trap	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1955
119. Weep They Will	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1955
120. I Thought About You	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1956
121. You Make Me Feel So Young	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1956
122. Memories Of You	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1973
123. I've Got You Under My Skin	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1956
124. Too Marvelous For Words	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1956
125. Don't Like Goodbyes	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1956
126. How Little We Know	The Capitol Years Vol. 1	1956
127. Hey Jealous Lover	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1956

128. You're Sensational	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1956
129. Close To You	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1957
130. Stars Fell On Alabama	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1957
131. I Got Plenty Of Nothing	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1957
132. I Wish I Were In Love Again	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1957
133. The Lady Is A Tramp	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1957
134. Night And Day	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1957
135. Lonesome Road	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1957
136. If I Had You	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1957
137. Where Are You?	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1957
138. I'm A Fool To Want You	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1957
139. Witchcraft	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1957
140. Something Wonderful Happens in S.	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1957
141. All The Way	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1957
142. Chicago	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1957
143. Let's Get Away From It All	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1958
144. Autumn In New York	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1958
145. Come Fly With Me	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1958
146. Everybody Loves Somebody	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1958
147. It's The Same Old Dream	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1958
148. Put Your Dreams Away	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1958
149. Here Goes	The Capitol Years Vol. 2	1958
150. Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out To Dry	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1958
151. Ebb Tide	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1958
152. One For My Baby	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1958
153. To Love And Be Loved	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1958
154. I Couldn't Care Less	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1973
155. The Song Is You	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1959
156. Just In Time	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1959
157. Come Dance With Me	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1959
158. French Foreign Legion	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1959
159. High Hopes	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1959
160. I've Got A Crush On You	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1960
161. Embraceable You	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1960
162. Nice'n Easy	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1960
163. I Can't Believe That You're In Love	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1961

164. On The Sunny Side Of The Street	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1961
165. Almost Like Being In Love	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1961
166. I'll Be Seeing You	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1962
167. I've Got A Right To Sing The Blues	The Capitol Years Vol. 3	1962
168. Strangers In The Night	My Way: The Best of FS	1966
169. New York, New York	My Way: The Best of FS	1979
170. I Get A Kick Out Of You	My Way: The Best of FS	1962
171. Somethin' Stupid	My Way: The Best of FS	1967
172. Moon River	My Way: The Best of FS	1964
173. What Now My Love	My Way: The Best of FS	1966
174. Summer Wind	My Way: The Best of FS	1966
175. For Once In My Life	My Way: The Best of FS	1969
176. Love And Marriage	My Way: The Best of FS	1965
177. My Kind Of Town	My Way: The Best of FS	1964
178. Fly Me To The Moon	My Way: The Best of FS	1964
179. The Best Is Yet To Come	My Way: The Best of FS	1963
180. It Was A Very Good Year	My Way: The Best of FS	1965
181. That's Life	My Way: The Best of FS	1966
182. Bad, Bad Leroy Brown	My Way: The Best of FS	1973
183. Mack The Knife	My Way: The Best of FS	1986
184. Love's Been Good To Me	My Way: The Best of FS	1969
185. L.A. Is My Lady	My Way: The Best of FS	1984

François

SONG	ALBUM	YEAR
1. Ce soir je vais boire	Comme d'habitude	1967
2. Je veux chaque dimanche une fleur	Comme d'habitude	1967
3. Pourquoi	Comme d'habitude	1967
4. Le martien	Comme d'habitude	1967
5. La plus belle chose du monde	Comme d'habitude	1967
6. Pardon	Comme d'habitude	1967
7. L'homme au traineau	Comme d'habitude	1967
8. Rien rien rien	Comme d'habitude	1967

9. Ma fille	Comme d'habitude	1967
10. Mais quand le matin	Comme d'habitude	1967
11. Même si tu revenais	Même si tu revenais	1965
12. Silhouettes	Même si tu revenais	1965
13. Le jouet extraordinaire	Même si tu revenais	1965
14. Geordie	Même si tu revenais	1965
15. Ce monde absurde	Même si tu revenais	1965
16. Sois fier	Même si tu revenais	1965
17. Quand un bateau passe	Même si tu revenais	1965
18. Je t'aime trops toi	Même si tu revenais	1965
19. Je devrais dormir	Même si tu revenais	1965
20. Mais n'essaie pas de me mentir	Même si tu revenais	1965
21. Tout le monde rit d'un clown	Même si tu revenais	1965
22. Je sais	Même si tu revenais	1965
23. Belles, Belles, Belles	2 CD Collection	1962
24. Si j'avais un marteau	2 CD Collection	1963
25. J'y pense et puis j'oublie	2 CD Collection	1964
26. Pauvre petite fille riche	2 CD Collection	1963
27. La ferme du bonheur	2 CD Collection	1964
28. Alors salut	2 CD Collection	1965
29. Donna Donna	2 CD Collection	1965
30. Laisse-moi tenir ta main	2 CD Collection	1964
31. Chaque jour c'est la même chose	2 CD Collection	1964
32. Le temps des pleurs	2 CD Collection	1967
33. Il fait beau, il fait bon	2 CD Collection	1971
34. Je tiens un tigre par la queu	2 CD Collection	1966
35. Petite mèche de cheveux	2 CD Collection	1964
36. Marche tout droit	2 CD Collection	1964
37. Éloïse	2 CD Collection	1968
38. J'attendrai	2 CD Collection	1967
39. C'est la même chanson	2 CD Collection	1971
40. Winchester Cathedral	2 CD Collection	1967
41. Les cloches sonnaient	2 CD Collection	1965
42. Hey potatoes	2 CD Collection	1963
43. Un monde de musique	2 CD Collection	1969
44. C'est de l'eau, c'est du vent	2 CD Collection	1970

45. Les moulins de mon coeur	2 CD Collection	1969
46. Fleur sauvage	2 CD Collection	1970
47. Les choses de la maison	2 CD Collection	1965
48. Y'a le printemps qui chante	2 CD Collection	1972
49. Rêveries	2 CD Collection	1969
50. Le monde est grand les gens sont beau	2 CD Collection	1970
51. Une petite larme m'a trahi	Belles, Belles, Belles	1969
52. Si douce à mon souvenir	Belles, Belles, Belles	1970
53. Mais combien de temps	Belles, Belles, Belles	1967
54. Le Nabout twist	Belles, Belles, Belles	1962
55. Ne t'en fait pas mon vieux	Belles, Belles, Belles	1962
56. Ali Baba Twist	Belles, Belles, Belles	1962
57. Un claire de lune à Maubeuge	Belles, Belles, Belles	1962

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